

East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership Minutes of the Board Meeting

Tuesday 25 January 2022

(Virtual Meeting - held via Microsoft Teams)

Present: Stuart Dunn, Kester Noble, Christine Carter, Allan Blakemore, Mel Carr, Cllr David Brown, Angela Stobbart, Insp Sarah Honeyman, Malcolm Gray, Tony Cutmore, Cllr Chris Varty, Cllr Chris Lines, Cllr Gary Hutchinson, Cllr Maura McKeon, Cllr Jan Blakey

Officer Attendance: Jane Bellis – AAP Co-ordinator
Claire Craft – Community Development Project Officer
Marie Ainscough – AAP Support Officer

Presenters: Gordon Elliott, Alice Evans, Lynne Watson

Forum Members: 7 forum members attended the meeting

Apologies: George Storey, Peter Maddison

1 Introductions and Apologies

Allan Blakemore, AAP Chair welcomed everyone to the virtual Board Meeting of the East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership. A round of introductions followed and everyone was reminded of the Teams meeting etiquette.

Apologies [see above].

The Chair highlighted that although the names of Board and Forum members are not included in the body of the minutes; advice given in relation to the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), is that the board minutes are made public, therefore should anyone wish to remain anonymous they were to state this.

Anyone present who had a conflict of interest in any item on the agenda was asked to declare an interest at the start of the agenda item to ensure this was formally recorded in the meeting minutes.

It was noted that a group had been set up to review the Terms of Reference which are included in the Induction Pack for new Board Members. The current Induction Pack is available for any Board Members who want it, on the understanding that it's subject to review.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 November 2021 & Matters Arising

The Chair reviewed the previous minutes for matters arising, actions and accuracy. There were no matters arising.

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3 Countywide Partner Issues:

3.1 2022/23 County Council Revenue Budget Consultation

Gordon Elliott, Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement – Durham County Council delivered a presentation on the 2022/23 County Council Revenue Budget Consultation.

A breakdown on the £1.1 billion Gross Expenditure Budget is as follows –

- Sum financed by Council Tax £241 million
- Percentage of Gross Expenditure 21%
- Expenditure on Employees £300 million
- Expenditure purchasing services £427 million

The council's biggest budgets relate to the purchase of services such as residential and nursing care and home care for adults and residential care and support for children.

Council tax is calculated by reference to the "Band D" Council tax calculation. In County Durham the majority of properties are in the lower Council Tax Bands and only pay a proportion of the Band D Council Tax. Durham County Council is a low tax base authority due to the high proportion of properties in the lower Bands. This means we have a low Band D equivalent tax base and a higher Band D Council Tax. In County Durham 83% of all properties are in Bands A to C.

A question was asked of East Durham Rural Corridor AAP –

What is the AAP view on balancing the 2022/23 forecast budget shortfall from council tax increases vs reductions in services or one-off use of reserves which would increase the savings required in 2023/24?

Feedback from budget consultations will be taken on board and a Budget report will be presented to Cabinet on 9 February 2022. A Cabinet report will then be presented to Full Council on 23 February 2022 where budget approval and council tax for 2022/23 will be sought.

Gordon was thanked for his presentation and the meeting was opened for questions –

- You referred to a sum of £43m as a shortfall for next year, that's the 4year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) period isn't it? It's not for next year. Can you clarify that the £43m is not just for one year, it's for over the period the MTFP and it's now in Jeff Garfoot's revised figures of under £30m.
- Re the Government's levelling up agenda, how does County Durham compare to other wealthy affluent areas of the country?
- How is the 3% increase for Adult and Social Care and 1.99% for Council services split? Does that mean there is going to be less for Adult Social Care or all for Adult Social Care and none for Council services?
- Re the new County Hall building, what are the capital/revenue costs of having two County Halls and not decommissioning the old County Hall? There must be an ongoing cost each year for that.
- I have worries about efficiency savings ie library and art services. I would not like efficiency savings to be around these types of services.
- Is there going to be support for people who are going to financially struggle?
- Is there any way we can help people with energy bills on a local level?

3.2 2022/23 CRMP Consultation

Peter Maddison from Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service had submitted his apologies and was therefore unable to answer any questions on the 2022/23 CRMP Consultation.

4 Priority Updates (from Task Group and Projects)

4.1 COVID-19 Recovery Project Summaries – agreement of Task Group recommendations. *(Task Group held Tuesday 18th January)*

Board members had received a copy of the project summaries which were discussed in detail at the Covid-19 Recovery Task Group meeting held on 18 January.

We received 3 new applications totalling £29,572.14. Task group members recommended that all 3 applications be taken to the Board for agreement. All appraisal queries received satisfactory responses.

The Board approved the following Area Budget projects –

- i. Bowburn Community Association – Bowburn Community Centre – New Chairs
- ii. Bowburn Youth Club – Bowburn Fitness Project
- iii. Trimdon Grange Community Centre – Centre Developing

With all 3 projects signed off by the Board, all the Community Recovery funding has been allocated and there is £112,432.86 Area Budget remaining including Youth Fund and Welfare Reform.

With the £210,000 Towns and Villages Fund allocation, we have a total of £332,432.86 left to allocate. Although there is still a lot left to allocate, we have spent the £125,000 that we needed to this year.

Jane thanked Board members, task group members, Claire, Lyndsey, and Marie for all their hard work.

With regards to the Towns and Villages allocation, work continues with colleagues in other departments to ensure projects, or elements of projects are not already being picked up, or that there is other pots of funding available. Once we have made progress on this work, a task group meeting will be arranged; and Board members will be updated on progress in due course. A group is running in Sedgefield who are looking at a potential project there. There are other projects in the pipeline and work is ongoing.

The next meeting of the Covid-19 Recovery Task Group is scheduled to take place on Thursday 17 March 2022 at 10.00 am.

4.2 February Half Term Holiday Activities with Healthy Food

Task group members recommended that the following applications be brought to the Board for agreement -

- Rose Cottage CIC
- Bowburn Youth Project
- Fishburn Youth and Community Centre
- Trimdon Grange Community Centre
- Investing in Children
- Deaf Hill Ward Regeneration Partnership

Each AAPs allocation is based on the number of free school meal eligible pupils in the area. EDRC has been allocated £2,227.

In relation to the Holiday Activities with Healthy Food in 2022/2023; we have received the grant letter for the Fun and Food programme from the DfE. In Durham we have been allocated slightly less than this year at £2,338,740. In terms of the guidance, very little has changed from this year and funding is still for FSM eligible children and only for Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays.

The Board approved the Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Fund applications for February Half Term 2022.

4.3 OASES, Plastic Fantastic? 2 Project Update

Alice Evans – OASES delivered a short presentation on the Plastic Fantastic? 2 Project. The project aims to raise awareness of the problems with single-use plastic by linking school children with older people, to learn about life before single-use plastic.

Over 20 older people have volunteered to talk to the children about life before single-use plastic; 4 litter picks have taken place; 100+ pledges have been made about reducing single-use plastic and 100+ children have been awarded their John Muir Discovery Award.

Covid-19 has caused a few delays with the project, due to school closures.

Questions/comments raised in relation to Alice's presentation included –

- Have you any plans rolling this out in other schools? I like the idea of educating the children about dropping litter and children can educate their parents.
- Sedgefield Cloggers is a litter picking group in Sedgefield and I am keen to see more joining up of schools, OASES and community groups such as the Cloggers and the Wombles to explore more of this in the future.
- Re-use before recycle – I think this is a very important point.
- Once this project is finished what next?

4.4 Fishburn Youth and Community Centre – report on impact the AAP has had on their services

On behalf of Fishburn Youth and Community Centre. Lynne Watson thanked the AAP. She went on to say that almost 5 years ago, they were in danger of losing the community centre and the youth club but by working alongside the AAP team refurbishment work had been carried out, holiday activities around food poverty, the children had visited Durham University using the rowing tank there and worked alongside Olympians. At Christmas small hampers were sent out alongside activities and one family had been in touch to say that it was virtually the only food that they had. The Covid Recovery money helped to support a centre manager and cleaner salary which also helped with the lottery bid. Lynne was delighted to report that lottery funding has now funded all 5 community centre staff until the end of March 2025. *Thank you again from all of us.*

5 Co-ordinators Report including Quarterly Performance Management

Members of the public are being invited to apply to become a public representative on the Board of the East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership. For an application pack or for more information, please contact the AAP team via email eastdurhamruralaap@durham.gov.uk or call 03000 261128. Information continues to be advertised via our usual routes; however, Board members were encouraged to get the message out in the community.

On behalf of the EDRC AAP, Allan Blakemore attends meetings of the East Durham Forum which aims to identify suitable areas in the County that can be used as Temporary Stop Over Areas for the GRTs community visiting the area during the busy migration period of Spring to Autumn. Angela Stobbart from Believe said she had been in touch with Veronica Benn and put her in touch with one of her teams.

Gordon Elliott gave a brief update on what had been discussed at the Countywide Group meeting -

There is £300,000 to spend by the end of the financial year. There was an early discussion around a mental health active walking project for school children and their families. The project has secured match funding and is for £42,000 towards the scheme working with schools across the county. A presentation was delivered around employment. Karbon have been working with economic development agencies and a proposal had been received for circa £100,00+ to fund job fayres. The group also looked at a £120,000 project which the Police strongly supported 'The Fearless Project'. Other projects were considered around mental health; and will be coming to the next meeting of the group. The team working on this project have been asked to write up a summary on what is to be considered.

Gordon reported on the County Durham Partnership Event around Environment and Climate Change which took place on 26 November. 80 people attended, there were various workshops and presentations from youth groups. Around half of the attendees completed the questionnaire and 100% of the people who attended found it a worthwhile event.

With regards to the quarterly monitoring of Area Budget projects, the reports for Q3 covering the period October 2021 – December 2021 had been sent to project leads and some reports had been returned. Further information is available upon request.

6 Local Neighbourhood Issues (LNI)

6.1 Locality Policing Issues

Neighbourhood Insp Sarah Honeyman provided an update on local policing issues.

There was no update from other policing teams.

- ❖ During the first week of New Year there had been a spate of burglaries across Sedgefield, Trimdon and Fishburn and the east of the county. A couple of arrests had been made.
- ❖ On New Years Eve, the ANPR camera which the EDRC AAP funded, was completed damaged in the Trimdon area. A spare camera was installed and destroyed. Sarah said this had been mentioned to the MP and they are looking to install some cameras that are not obvious to where they are. She hoped to have an update on this in the coming

weeks and was aware that Trimdon Parish Council had written in support of them. Sarah asked the AAP if they would write to the Chief Constable about the need of a replacement camera due to the crime in the area. **Action:** Jane to pull together some draft wording in support of this and Sarah agreed to make enquiries around funding for a covert camera. Sarah to liaise with Jane on this.

- ❖ Anti-social behaviour in Coxhoe and Fishburn - a walkabout with the policing team, partners and Durham County Council did happen and there had been an increase in patrols resulting in reduced problems.

7 Neighbourhood Budget Projects

The following Neighbourhood Budget project was shared with the board.

Name of Scheme: Cassop Boiler, Pipes & Radiator Replacement

Councillor(s): Blakey / Hutchinson

Interest Declared: No

Amount: £4,000 (£2,000 each)

The Board was happy to approve the project.

8 Date and time of next board meeting

The next board meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 30 March 2022 at 9.30 am via Teams.

Subsequent Board Meeting Dates

To be arranged.

Meetings will take place via Teams until further notice and will move back to the traditional 5.00 pm – 7.00 pm meeting time as soon as possible.

Everyone was thanked for their attendance and the meeting closed.