

Durham Area Action Partnership Minutes of the Board Meeting

Thursday 20 January 2022

(Virtual Meeting - held via Microsoft Teams)

Board Members

Attendance: Lee Alexander, Cllr Lucy Hovvels, Cllr Liz Brown, Rebecca Eves, Insp Dave Clarke, Alice Wilkes, Chris Tindale, Simon Bartlett, Gary Tidbury, Cllr Eric Mavin, Paul Howard, Cllr Christine Fletcher, Ian Moore (joined late), Parish Cllr Maureen Boettcher, Victoria Ashfield

AAP Officer

Attendance: Craig Morgan – AAP Co-ordinator
Wendy Lavelle – Community Development Project Officer
Marie Ainscough – AAP Support Officer

Presenter: Lee Alexander – Durham County Council

Forum Members: 19 forum members attended the meeting

Apologies Board: Sarah Burns, Christine Scollen, Cllr Richard Ormerod, Matthew Mills, Rev Joanne Thorns, Eileen Finlay

Apologies Forum: Jean Foulds, Chris Lee

1 [Introductions and Apologies](#)

On behalf of Ian Moore, Cllr Liz Brown chaired the meeting. Everyone was welcomed to the virtual Durham AAP Board Meeting.

Apologies for absence, [as above].

2 [Teams Etiquette and Participation](#)

Everyone was reminded of the meeting etiquette as well as the AAP's Code of Conduct. Information on the Code of Conduct and behaviour in meetings had been shared following a Board discussion.

3 Presentation: Durham County Council Budget 2022/23

Lee Alexander, Durham County Council delivered a presentation on Durham County Council's Budget and Council Tax Position for 2022/23 and the 2022/23 to 2025/26 Medium Term Financial Plan.

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 Durham 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.

Lee was thanked for his presentation and the meeting was opened for questions and comments -

- ❖ Pressures will be caused by a 3% rise. When allowance for pay rises are considered and current inflation is 5% and rising. This is unsustainable if you implement a 3% rise for the next financial year. Large risk of building the budget on 3%, you should go with the full council tax rise.
- ❖ What is the level of reserves does there have to be a minimum level are we at that level how close are we?
- ❖ We have a duty of responsibility to provide services and due to Covid there is a lot more demand and pressure on Adults and Social Care and I think people are happy to pay more if they can see efficient services being delivered. This is the consultation process and does not give us

much time to speak to the wider community and share the consultation before it goes to Cabinet. Where does the feedback go to and who collates the feedback? Can we have a copy of slides and the feedback?

- ❖ Would not want to cut deeply into reserves as this is needed for capital projects when costs are rising rapidly anyway. We should say what they are, cuts not efficiency savings.

Lee agreed that the situation is unpredictable by the Councils finance team had been good in previous years at predicting costs and spend over the year and had build a budget to deal with this.

- ❖ Shocked to hear how little we raise in council tax compared to other places. I do know some places in the south of England that raise all the money they need from council tax and don't need any support. There are lots of houses in the city which are council tax exempt. Is there any way we can look at business tax on those landlords who make huge profits out of students to recoup some of that money lost for council tax exempt properties?

4 Selection of Vice Chair Public and Improving Our Villages and City Task Group Chair

It was agreed that Chris Tindale be appointed as the new Vice Chair for the Public representatives on the Board and Cllr Liz Brown be appointed as Chair for the Improving Our Villages and City Task Group.

5 Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Board members had not received a copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2021. Craig agreed to send a copy to Board members and defer formal approval until the next meeting.

Matters Arising

- Police E-Bikes – we have received further correspondence from Insp Dave Clarke. This will be looked at with the potential of resubmitting the application.
- OASES – Nature and Nature – the applicant has come back with an amended project based around training of teachers. This will be discussed at the February Task Group/Board meeting(s).
- Durham University Student Volunteering – Social Inclusion – awaiting to hear from them. Craig to chase them up.
- Go The Distance – application with the funding team.
- A consultation event was held on the Durham City Framework and Sniperley Masterplan which was well attended. The comments from this meeting will form part of their summary leading into the masterplan and framework. Craig thanked everyone for their contribution.

6 Neighbourhood Questions

There had been no neighbourhood questions submitted however, Craig was asked if he had received a question from St Nicholas Community Forum. The forum member agreed to send it to him again and Craig will chase it up.

7 AAP Funding Update

- Durham AAP have £245,000 to allocate this year and need to spend and approve £125,000 of this by 31 March 2021.
- If we approve the projects to be discussed at this meeting, we will be over that amount if not we will be under the £125,000.
- The money we have allocated this year has brought in £137,000 of match funding (this is based on £142,000 should the projects be approved at this meeting)
- £104,000 of neighbourhood budget has been allocated attracting £96,000 of match funding.

8 Project Approvals / Task Group Feedback

Covid Recovery and Emerging Issues

Task Group Feedback

A meeting of the Covid Recovery and Emerging Issues Task Group was held on 14 January 2022.

Project Applications for Discussion

- Waddington Street Centre Digital Inclusion

Amount of funding applied for: £10,000.00 Total project cost: £15,658.00

The funding will allow them to continue employing a Digital Champion, who will support mental health service users to access the internet safely. The project will run between April 2022 – March 2023.

The task group was happy to support the project and recommended that it be taken to the Board meeting for wider consideration.

The Board approved the project.

- Durham Action On Single Housing Volunteer Support

Amount of funding applied for: £13,531.00 Total project cost: £16,298.00

The Revitalised Volunteer Programme will create 40 new, sustainable, long term volunteering opportunities for DASH residents and service users of voluntary sector organisations across Durham City, building on existing relationships to benefit both service users and partner organisations.

Service users have been particularly badly affected by the pandemic and those experiencing mental health problems, lack of physical exercise, poverty and isolation have suffered the worst impact. DASH is a small organisation with limited resources and for them to achieve their aims, will need to recruit a part-time Volunteer Co-ordinator.

The task group was happy to support the project and recommended that it be taken to the Board meeting for wider consideration, subject to the figures being rejigged following comments made in relation to the rise in the living wage.

The Board approved the project.

Fun and Food Applications

The closing date was 12 noon on 19 January and 4 applications were received for February Half Term 2022 totalling £5,573.00. Durham AAP have £2,956.00 to allocate towards the Fun and Food Scheme. Wendy gave a brief overview on each to the four projects.

1. Cheesy Waffles
2. Harbour Support Services
3. Go The Distance
4. Durham City Youth Project

[Cllr Liz Brown left the meeting]

County Councillors Eric Mavin, Lesley Mavin and Christine Fletcher kindly offered to fund the Cheesy Waffles project. Craig to speak to the Funding Team re this.

Towns and Villages Funding

Bill Lightburn from the Towns and Villages Team delivered a presentation on the AAP and Councillor Funding element of the Towns and Villages Programme.

AAP Funding

- Each AAP has received £210,000 – can carry out joint working across AAP areas.
- County Councillors have £10,000 in addition to the £19,400 neighbourhood budget allocation.
- Unless there are exceptional circumstances, projects supported should have a minimum contribution from this fund of £10,000 and seek to achieve an external match funding rate of at least 30%.
- AAPs should cap any spend on feasibility studies to a maximum of £30,000.
- Only not for profit constituted organisations are eligible.
- All funded projects need to have started by 30 March 2024.

In the Durham AAP area, one project has been approved – Bearpark Play Area Improvements and there are four projects in development.

Bill asked the AAP for support around project ideas.

9 Neighbourhood Budget Approvals

The following neighbourhood budget projects were shared with the Board -

Name of Scheme: St Cuthbert's Church Path

Councillor(s): Brown / Scott

Interest Declared: No

Amount: £13,490.96

Name of Scheme: Installation of Defibrillators

Councillor(s): Hopgood / Simmons / Wilkes

Interest Declared: Yes, All Cllrs are also Parish Cllrs and the Parish own the Framwellgate Moor Pavillion

Amount: £4,220.00

Name of Scheme: Tree planting

Councillor(s): E Mavin / L Mavin

Interest Declared: No

Amount: £4,602.83

The Board was happy to approve the projects and the interest as declared.

10 Co-ordinators / Chairs Update

Co-ordinator's Update

- ❖ There is a public representative vacancy on the board due to the resignation from the Vice Chair. The deadline for applications is 31 January. Interest has been shown.
- ❖ In the past Durham AAP have aligned Project Board Champions to various projects and Craig said he'd like to explore this again.
- ❖ Setting our AAP priorities for 2022/23 – we are waiting for the process to be finalised in line with all 14 AAPs.

Chair's Update

Ian Moore had attended the countywide funding meeting. Out of the £300,000 all but £40,000 has been allocated. Ian provided a summary on three of the projects that were discussed -

- ❖ Walk and Talk Scheme
- ❖ Fearless Project
- ❖ Employability Project

11 Partner Updates

Durham BID

Paul Howard gave a brief update -

- ❖ New Chairperson appointed - Lisa Johnson from Discovering Durham
- ❖ Just set up an events group bringing together partners who are organising events in the city
- ❖ Fire and Ice Event – 25 and 26 February. They are hoping to do some animation in the city every fortnight for the rest of the year.
- ❖ New member of staff starting shortly responsible for social media, business communication and event support.
- ❖ A group is being set up to look at how we improve the Christmas lights in the city.

Craig had prepared a report on the Durham BID - Durham City Covid-19 Recovery project based on the monitoring information provided.

There were no questions or queries raised in relation to the report.

Durham University

The University started the term with online teaching, transitioning in week two to in-person arrangements for all but large lectures, and with full in-person teaching resuming in week three. This process allows for review of the prevalence of Covid-19 within our community and enables us to ensure that our mitigation measures are appropriate for the current level of risk.

Testing on arrival and throughout term is still encouraged and three testing sites remain in use. Test to Participate arrangements also remain in place for those who wish to attend College bars or take part in Wider Student Experience activities, with the exception of low-risk outdoor activities.

Up-to-date information on cases can be found here:

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/coronavirus/cases/>

The new term has brought Professor Karen O'Brien to the University as Vice-Chancellor and Warden. [You can read more about Karen and her role here.](#)

We're also celebrating being ranked in the [top 30 in the People and Planet Green League rankings](#). While this represents a leap of 66 places since the previous league table, we understand that there is more to do and will continue developing our environmental initiatives.

There's a lot more going on, including events and opportunities to get involved. [Signing up for our Community Newsletter](#) is a great way to keep up-to-date, or email community.swceoffice@durham.ac.uk

NHS

The County Durham Care Partnership brings together NHS organisations, Durham County Council and other health and care providers to work together in true collaboration to deliver improved, joined up health and social care services closer to people's homes.

The latest edition of the Partnership Newsletter can be found at <https://countydurhamccg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2021/12/CDCP-Partnership-News-Christmas-2021-EMAIL3.pdf>

Police

Dave Clarke provided an update on local policing issues including the Fearless Project to combat anti-social behaviour particularly around the outlying areas; incident rates are no higher than usual but higher than pre-Covid, the affect the Omicron variant has had on staff and they have been hit with quite a few commercial burglaries, two individuals have been remanded.

Fire Update

The Community Risk Management Plan consultation is open until 7 February 2021.

12 [Any Other Business](#)

None.

13 [Date and time of next meeting](#)

- 22 February 2022, 2:00pm
- 23 March 2022, 6:00pm

Everyone was thanked for their attendance and the meeting closed.