

3 Towns Partnership Board Meeting
6pm on Thursday 7 July 2022 at Crook Civic Centre

PRESENT:

Partner Organisations

Liz Bradley
Graham Tomaszko
Sgt. Grant Cockerill

Public Representatives

Mary Hall
Fiona Nicol
Chris Ebdon
Jay Conlon
David Dixon

Elected Members

Councillor Richard Manchester, Durham County Council
Councillor Patricia Jopling, Durham County Council
Councillor Mike Currah, Durham County Council
Councillor Paul Stokes, Tow Law Town Council

Co-opted Members

Councillor Margaret Elgie, Greater Willington Town Council

Officer Attendance:

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

Presenters:

None

Public Attendance:

5 members of the public were in attendance

Apologies:

Cllr Olwyn Gunn, Cllr Anne Reed, Cllr Fraser Tinsley, Gordon Elliot, Helen Ward, Robbie Roddiss, Allan Coleman

A1. Welcome and Introductions

MH opened the meeting and thanked the Board for attending. Everyone at the Board meeting introduced themselves.

A2. Agreement of minutes from the previous meeting 19 May 2022 – Matters Arising

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

A3. Countywide Partners

Poverty Action Strategy Presentation

SD presented the presentation to the Board and opened the Board up to questions.

Are these the right objectives? Where are the gaps/what more do we need to do? Are there any groups of people missing?

Discussions were had around poverty and what we can do to help more. A board member informed the board that employment levels are increasing. Help is available for those who need it, however, the issue is encouraging people to applying and accept the help. There are 24% of people eligible for free school meals that don't take it up. Schools are the main way forward to get these people to apply, although, the AAPS could promote free school meals and healthy start vouchers.

Issues were raised regarding those in work and claiming universal credit. Recently Durham County Council have given the government energy rebate back to those eligible. Paying via direct debit this was refunded quickly, however, most of those who are claiming universal credit do not pay via this method. They must manually apply for the refund and the process hasn't been made clear to everyone, there is also an 8-minute wait to get through to call centres to discuss. More help needs to be given and faster payments as these are the people who need it. Concerns were raised on how this will also impact the fuel energy refund later in the year.

Only a percentage of those people will actively try and seek help. How do we get the information to those who need to know and how to access it? It would be beneficial to get other partners and agencies covering aspects of the strategy to help communicate these issues and actively encouraging and supporting people to access these.

A comment was made that it is valid to ask schools to keep an eye out, however, if those families aren't accessing it or don't want to access the provision, they won't. People don't want to seem like they need help. Suggestion to give the assistance without making them feel inferior, i.e., support via grassroots will not be seen as coming from the local authority, this might encourage more people to access the help and help decrease the stigma of being on those benefits.

A discussion took place around employment. Issues were raised of those in employment's reluctance to apply for the benefits they're entitled to as well as increasing fuel costs impacting on these people as most travel out of area for work.

A suggestion was made for a most vulnerable list, like that used in the early pandemic, to contact those who may need this extra help. This could potentially help, however, there is a large number of people who hide and will stay hidden. An idea to discover where poverty exists and start from there. Suggestion of encouraging schools to recycle costumes etc from world book day to help families also. Currently running in other areas of County Durham and are a success.

It was suggested that sending information through local communities may help, such as Tow Law Food Bank and Sunnyside Café and doctors' surgeries.

The Board agreed with the principles.

ACTION: For AAPs to become more involved where possible and help distribute this information to those who need it.

A4. 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 five applications had been circulated to the Board electronically since the last meeting.

NW said there is 1 application to go through at the Meeting.

1. Tow Law AFC PA Hub, Tow Law AFC

Councillor Richard Manchester

NB £4,139; Match £0; Total £4,139

The Board were informed there were no declarations of interest, therefore the project is for information and comment only.

No comments made

A5. Priorities and Action Plans

Action Plan and Project Updates

SD updated the Board and informed them that:

- The CCTV project that was expected in May, should be completed by mid-August.
- The Wi-Fi project has been delayed Countywide with supply issues

Both projects are going ahead but are delayed. It was questioned if there are any ongoing plans to turn Glenholme into an event hub. The chair informed the board Glenholme Park was part of levelling up bid for the area and is on the agenda later under the presentations received at the County Durham Partnership Forum.

Board Priority Champions

The Board were informed that we now have 3 priority champions from the board:

- Community Recovery will be championed by **RR**, discussions will take place next week to arrange the first meeting.
- Community Safety will be championed by **GC**. The next meeting is 14 July 2022, 5pm – 6.30pm at Crook Civic Centre.
- Towns and Villages will be championed by **MC**. Meeting date will be sent out shortly.

Towns and Villages

JA gave an update on Towns and villages. The Board were informed that the Towns and Villages teams contracts have been extended to March 2024, giving more time to work on the allocations and budgets.

Towns and Villages have been looking into the issues from the consultation and previous Board meeting. The Task group will be looking at distinct focus areas, although some do cross over, such as ASB with community safety.

There were concerns regarding road safety issues and the team are currently works ongoing to gather more information. The traffic management team and police traffic management are

gathering information for next task group. The Task group will be after the summer to allow time to collate this information. The Task group will make any recommendations to the Board.

Children and Young Peoples Small Grants

JC informed the Board that he joined 3 Towns youth forum in 2011 and attended until 2016. The youth forum was responsible for the Children and Young Peoples Small Grants pot. This allowed children and young people groups to apply for grants up to £500 for projects to benefit them, the youth forum then made decisions on which applications should get the funding. There is currently £4454 left from the previous small grant's pots; the last Youth awards and from the youth forum running costs.

The aim is to look at setting up a revolving panel of children and young people to make decisions on this funding. The opportunity will be advertised to local community groups to see if any young people would like to get involved. Age range 11-17 years. Information will also be distributed on social media in the following weeks. If any groups are interested, please let the **AAP** or **JC** know.

Bus Board

PS informed the Board that the first meeting was 25th May and it took over 2 hours to get to the meeting using buses from Tow Law. Bus timings for Tow Law are not regular enough for those attending work/meetings. The next meeting is 11th July. The presentation and minutes from the previous meeting have been requested, however, have not been received. Arriva have stated they are going to improve bus stock and have been informed that buses travelling from Tow Law only once an hour is affecting employability.

Discussions were had around a Facebook group for complaints about Arriva buses, particularly buses breaking down. It was stated that Fir Tree don't have a bus service at all, however, Arriva won't use big buses as they just aren't viable. A suggestion was made to use a smaller local bus service to provide in these areas instead. This has already been rolled out in other areas in the country and appears to be a success. Bus connections appear to be an issue for Arriva as buses are based at different depots, e.g., Darlington and Durham, therefore connections aren't always possible.

County Durham Partnership Forum.

MH gave feedback from the County Durham Partnership Forum. The levelling up proposal submission date was yesterday. All proposals needed to be agreed by MPs. County Durham are submitting 5 applications across the county and decisions will be made in Autumn, but realistically may not secure all 5. There are conditions to the grants, such as they must have £11.4m match funding. Northwest Durham is looking at towns and parks, high street regeneration and walking/cycling route improvements/creation. £14m has been applied for in 3 Towns. There is a proposal for a new community hub and park improvements in Glenholme Park and a MUGA and events in Willington and a MUGA and football pitch improvements in Tow Law. The Board will be updated on the outcome in Autumn.

The Board were informed that some councillors are looking at making their own contingency plans to build a hub/community centre for children if the levelling up bid is not successful. Proposals were pushed for a pool and leisure centre; however, the numbers do not work in terms of costings, therefore it will not be possible.

MH reported back about the presentation they received regarding the community engagement review, ERS had been appointed to carry out the review. They will be contacting all AAPS as well as requesting to talk to young people to make sure they are heard. Paper copies are available. The AAP was last reviewed in 2011. There is an aim that the review will be finalised by December 2022.

ACTION: AAP to circulate any information to the Board.

Local Policing Update

GC gave the local policing update. The Board were informed that PACT meetings have started again face to face. They are currently trying to create a poster for dates to be able to advertise these. The AAP were present at the latest Crook PACT meeting which had good attendance and discussions. First issue raised was regarding the 101 service and timings. Police have been assured there is a plan in place to deal with this and that they are aware of the issue nationally.

Second issue raised was ASB, although, this is not as bad as what the media portrayed. Figures show that ASB has been dropping since January, particularly around youth issues. The increase of ASB began in January after the relaxing of covid restrictions, however, this has now decreased and in the last 30 days, there were just 2 incidents.

Operation HABU is still ongoing in Crook and Willington. Following discussions at the PACT meeting, police are trying to introduce a similar system to rural watch for ASB. An app called Zello is used which allows the members to turn their phones into radios to contact the police if they see an issue in the community at set organised times. A whats app group for this is also being explored. The police then attend and can make inquiries, it has proven to be very effective for rural watch and the same is hoped for ASB watch. Police are currently building bigger databases around the children involved in ASB and also working with their parents to get them back on the right track, generally the parents supportive of with this.

An update was given on community speed watch. It is a joint enterprise with police and community representatives using the speed watch vans and is proven to help with the issues. Has been situated across the 3 Towns recently with a good outcome.

The year's crime figures are 9% lower in Crook than last year. Violent crime is down 34% however theft is rising. Police are working with people, particularly in regard to poverty. Willington has slight issues with ASB at the moment, however, appears to be same children from Crook, but they are aware and intervening.

A question was asked about the ASB incidents in Tow Law?

GC confirmed there had been 3 in Tow Law in a week and they are dealing with those.

It was stated that ASB decreased all over Durham.

The Board were informed that the PACT meeting highlighted issues at West Springs and Orchard Close, however, as these had not been reported so they were not on the police system. If issues are not reported to the police, they cannot deal with them.

The ASB WhatsApp is in the early stages of being set up. Ground rules need to be set up for the groups to allow police to be involved. Police are liaising with members of the Crook ASB Facebook group to establish this. A wide variety of people are needed in hot spot areas. 99% of children over last few months have needed guidance and support rather than criminal proceedings. None of the identified youths have criminal convictions so far.

CE commented that Hunwick environmental group had 5/6 people sign up for community speed watch, however, there has been no formal training given for those.

GC responded that anyone who drives the speed watch van needs to be level 2 vetted, they are looking into overturning this to just check there are no underlying issues to speed up the process. This will be investigated and reported back to **CE**.

A7. Date and time of next meeting

6pm on Thursday 15 September 2022 at Crook Civic Centre