

DERWENT VALLEY PARTNERSHIP (DVP) BOARD MEETING

20 July 2022, Salvation Army Hall, Consett at 6pm



Elected Representatives

CLRs Kevin Earley, Stephen Robinson (Vice Chair), Kathryn Rooney, Alan Shield, Michelle Walton and Alex Watson

Partner Organisations

Mark Clelland (Chair) (Derwentside Trust), Alison Lazazzera (Durham County Council (DCC)), Philip Pollard (Karbon Homes) and Sgt Ian Raine (stand in for Insp Dave Stewart)

Public Representatives

Linda Acres, Helen Marley, Lea McConnell and Fraser Neill

DVP:

Fiona Kelly (AAP Co-ordinator), Kath Clements and Laura Sloan (Community Development Project Officers), Lynn Dougal (Support Officer) and Joanne Ashworth (AAP Towns and Villages Officer)

Member of the Public: 16

Presenters: Jay Conlon – Public Rep on 3 Towns AAP and Debra Kitching – Strategy Team Leader, DCC

Apologies:

Elected Rep: Cllr Declan Mulholland, Partner Rep: Rachel Rooney (Co Durham Clinical Commissioning Group) and Public Rep: Susan Mellor (Vice Chair)

1. Meeting opened by the Coordinator

Mark Clelland welcomed everyone to the meeting and Fiona Kelly went through housekeeping.

Board members introduced themselves and apologies were noted as above. There was one declaration of interest from Cllr Walton regarding the Consett Air Training Corps project proposal as she sits on the 1409 Squadron Committee.

2. Minutes of Previous Board Meeting (25 May 2022)

Matters arising

Page 2, unfortunately Claire Holt, (newly appointed public rep) will not be joining the Board due to a change in circumstances.

A further recruitment will be held early next year for the position which will also include a further two positions as two of the current public reps' terms will end in May 2023.

Page 3, regarding the two project proposals from Derwentside College and STEAM Ahead that were approved in May, the full funding applications have been received and are progressing through the AAP's appraisal process.

Page 7, the Board agreed at the May Board meeting to hold a Christmas event this year, however due to the ongoing works in Middle Street, Fiona contacted the Regeneration, Economy and Growth team to ascertain when the works will be completed. Unfortunately she was unable to obtain a definitive answer and suggested that we do not hold an event in the town centre this year and consider other alternatives.

Fiona said she received a request from a Board member to look at purchasing new Christmas lights for the town centre. However, Fiona has been advised from the Street Lighting team that Consett Town Centre will be getting new Christmas lights this year.

A brief discussion ensued that included:

- an email had been received that notified that they will be off site in Middle Street for 3 weeks at the end of July and will be in touch again when work will resume
- not holding the event this year and look at it again for next year
- considering looking at an alternative location, eg the park
- allocating part of the budget to a small grants fund so local communities can apply for funding to host their own Christmas event
- enquiring if there is a programme of works that the community can have access to and to ascertain how long the work will go on for
- finding out what type of lighting is available for the town centre

Due to the uncertainty around the works being completed by the end of the year, it was suggested that the DVP Team seek further clarification on the development and completion of Middle Street. A decision would then be made at the September Board meeting based on the information received whether to cancel the event or go ahead.

There were no further comments/matters arising and the minutes were AGREED.

3. Youth Involvement in AAPs

Shortly before the last public rep recruitment, the Board discussed how best to get young people interested and involved in the work of the Partnership and in joining the Board. Based on those discussions, Jay Conlon, Public Representative on the 3 Towns AAP Board, has been invited to give a talk on how to involve young people in the AAPs.

Jay said his involvement in the AAPs and public works started when he was around 8 years old. He grew up in a single parent household, lived on a council estate and joined a youth forum in the village where he lived which then progressed onto the 3 Towns AAP creating a Youth Forum. He became a public rep with 3 Towns AAP in 2011-2016. He was also a non-voting member on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for children and young people for DCC. Following university, he joined 3 Towns AAP as a public rep again.

Recruiting young people as public reps on AAP boards is always going to be difficult as young people generally see this kind of thing mainly for older people. To get young people involved in the work of the AAP you need to build a relationship with them first and not try and recruit them first as a public rep on the board. A Board meeting environment can be intimidating to a young person. The key is to engage with them directly either via youth groups or by reaching out to those who do not engage easily and by asking and listening to them on what they would like to see changed in their area, how could that happen, why should it change, etc.

The 3 Towns AAP had a small grants scheme that was allocated to projects specific to children and young people and administered via the Youth Forum. The funding applications would have been written by and scrutinised by children and young people and they also had responsibility for allocating the funds.

It is important that young people are recruited differently to how you would recruit adults to become a public rep. It is about building that relationship with them first, explaining the process they are to become part of and that they can help to make a difference in their area.

Cllr Watson said that in the past Derwentside District Council had an elected youth forum with an allocated budget. A bus would travel around the Derwentside area and meet with young people. Unfortunately this was abolished when it became a unitary council. Jay said that the methods of engagement with young people has changed since those days. They tend to get a lot of information via their phones from Google, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter.

Fraser Neill said as a young person on the DVP Board he agrees with what Jay says. Within his organisation, they have a youth council with an elected chair and they are given money to allocate to projects that they would like to see within the organisation. He also said he is happy to discuss this further with the Board if they would like to do something similar within the Derwent Valley area.

Cllr Walton wondered if it would be better to visit the various youth groups and explain that if a member came along to a Board meeting, they would not be alone as other young people from other youth organisations would also be involved. Jay said it is important to engage with young people in their environment first. They are more likely to engage if you have taken the time to go into their space, talked to them and listened to what they have to say.

Cllr Walton also asked how many of the funding applications received by the 3 Towns AAP were awarded to youth activities. Jay said the Youth Forum were given responsibility for allocating funding from a small grants scheme to youth projects. A rule was that the applications had to be written by children and young people and would have to benefit them too. The Youth Forum scrutinised and debated the applications thoroughly before awarding any money.

Rosemary Morris (Forum) asked what the age range/limit is for young people on the Board/Forum. Jay said for AAP public reps the minimum age is 16 and for the Youth Forum it is 11-18 year olds. However, the definition of what constitutes a young person can vary between organisations.

Fiona thanked Jay for his time and input at the meeting.

4. Poverty Strategy and Action Plan Consultation

Debra Kitching gave a presentation on DCC's Poverty Action Strategy and Action Plan (a copy of the presentation is available upon request).

The Poverty Action Strategy and Plan for County Durham is reviewed regularly, and the 2020 review includes the immediate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and to deliver targeted interventions. It aims to:

‘Improve the standard of living and daily lives of those residents in County Durham who are experiencing financial hardship and to help alleviate long term issues that can lead households on low incomes to experience financial pressures and poverty’.

The [Poverty Action Strategy and Plan - Cabinet - April 2022.pdf \(durham.gov.uk\)](#) is available online.

As part of the consultation, Durham County Council is asking:

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

The consultation can be accessed via <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/Poverty> or by emailing povertyaction@durham.gov.uk.

Closing date for feedback and comments is 26 August 2022.

Cllr Shield, who is Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Equality and Inclusion and involved in the poverty strategy, said he gave a presentation earlier today that included issues around child poverty. For the first time the North East has the highest levels of child poverty (38%) in the UK. Other regions have seen increases but not at the level of the North East. He said the actions, participation and suggestions from everyone is very important in determining how we can tackle this issue.

Cllr Walton asked where people can access the information to take part. Debra said it is not on DCC's website as they are consulting via the AAP Board meetings and other Council forums, however it can be accessed via the snap survey.

Cllr Shield said that despite the difficulties people are facing, support is available via the council such as the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Hardship Support Scheme, Bread and Butter Thing, Fun and Food Fund for during the school holidays and a partnership with Citizens Advice County Durham, Durham Christian Partnership and East Durham Trust offering support on benefits, debt management and financial advice and help. In September, DCC are hosting the North East Child Poverty Commission conference which covers all regions in the North East.

Cllr Watson said those people with mental health issues can come across barriers when trying to access support and feels that targeted support is needed.

Philip Pollard asked about the Shared Prosperity Fund. Cllr Shield said we have been successful with the first bid from the Levelling Up Fund in the Bishop Auckland constituency. North West Durham, North Durham, Sedgfield, Durham City and East Durham constituencies have all submitted a bid and have been working collectively with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Alison Lazazzera said the council will be looking at the areas in County Durham where there are high levels of unemployment and reach out to try and match people with the council's job vacancies as well as those across our partners.

Rosemary Morris (Forum) said as the poverty problem has been around for a long time and has not gone away, she feels that DCC need to review what they have done so far as it is not working. She also said she would like to see more emphasis on skills development as the jobs are out there but not enough skilled people to fill them.

Mark thanked Debra for her presentation.

Fiona advised that the link to the survey will be circulated to Board members should they wish to take part.

5. Task Group Updates

Fiona gave an update on the task groups. Board members received copies of the associated documents prior to the meeting.

Towns and Villages Task Group

Apologies were given to the Board regarding the Towns and Villages (T&V) Report and Project Proposals which were sent out yesterday as they were only recently finalised.

Following the call out for projects, linked to the T&V Improvement Fund of £210k, the group received eight project proposals totalling a funding request of over £600k by the deadline date of 6 June.

The group reviewed the applications and the outcome is as follows:

The four projects below were not supported (as they did not fit with the issues that came out of the recent public consultations):

- Burnopfield Primary School - Engaging Community Cohesion and Learning Through Outdoor Play, £20,013
- Consett Heart - Regenerating the HEART, £24,620
- Crookhall Community Centre - Crookhall Community Hub Outdoor Space, £36,709
- Groundwork - Revitalising Caribbees Woodland, £65,003

The group is looking at projects that address some of the issues in the town centre and the two projects below are still being considered by the group with further discussions taking place:

- DCC Low Carbon Team - Carbon Reduction Project, £140,563

- Project Genesis Trust - Consett Town Centre Management, £180,000

Following extensive consultation with local community representatives, the majority of comments were around speeding and traffic issues. Therefore the group would like to recommend the following two projects for funding:

1. **Durham Constabulary - Community Speedwatch Vehicle, funding request of up to £42,000***

The vehicle would assist the Neighbourhood Policing Team and the work of the Speedwatch volunteers and would be deployed around the area.

*It is anticipated that the cost of £42k may reduce if match funding of up to £14k, to help with running costs, is confirmed by Durham Constabulary. Therefore the difference would be redirected to the Traffic and Speed Management proposal discussed below.

Cllr Shield said he is very supportive of this project and asked if the police would contribute to all or a proportion of the running costs and over what period of time are the running costs covered. Joanne Ashworth said we are waiting for a response from the police regarding the match funding, however we are aware that in other areas, where there is a speedwatch vehicle, the police has supported the full running costs.

Joanne also mentioned that costs have increased considerably over the last 5 years due to new technology such as Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras.

Linda Acres asked if there was any data/evidence from other areas who have used the vehicle in terms of reducing speeding and accidents. Joanne said she has not yet had a response on the data. However via her discussions with the Police Inspector, he said that it has been implemented in Weardale and Teesdale due to the success in the 3 Towns AAP area and he feels that if it was implemented in all areas, it would make a huge difference.

Lea McConnell agrees that more data needs to be available, especially if it has been implemented in other AAPs, and without being fully informed on the data/details of the proposal, it would be hard to make a decision whether to support it or not.

Lea and Fraser both felt that as a public rep they should have been made aware of the task group and received the associated paperwork. Fiona said that as they were both appointed as public reps at the end of May and the call out process ended in early June, they were not included on the distribution list for the task group. However, they are more than welcome to attend future task group meetings.

With regards to the call out process, Fiona said that generally, project proposals that come in would be scrutinised by the task group. Questions would be raised by group members and sent to the applicant for a response and then the recommendations by the task group are presented at a Board meeting for agreement. However if the Board feel that more information is required, we can go back to the applicant.

Cllr Walton said that the speedwatch proposal was discussed at length in the task group and as this will benefit the whole of the area, she suggested that the Board support the project rather than get more data that would delay it.

Cllr Robinson said that when drivers see speed cameras they slow down and over time they become accustomed to them in certain areas. He said that people start to change their driving habits and therefore this become the evidence/data.

After further debate, it was proposed that the Board either agree to support the project as it stands, subject to the applicant confirming match funding towards the running costs or there should be an amendment to the proposal and support the project in principle after receiving further data from the applicant.

The Board then voted to support the project as it stands with the results as follows:

for = 8

against = 1

abstain = 3

The Board APPROVED the Speedwatch Vehicle project at a cost of up to £42k subject to the applicant confirming the match funding of up to £14k.

2. DCC Traffic Management Team - Traffic and Speed Management Project, funding request of at least £68,000**

Traffic calming and speeding reduction measures (part time 20mph speed limit signs, speed indicating device (SID), Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS), signage and road markings) across the Derwent Valley area.

** The funding amount requested will depend on the outcome of the matching funding received from the Speedwatch Vehicle project above, but at a minimum request of £68k. There is flexibility on the number of schemes that can be delivered based on the amount of funding received.

A discussion took place with the following comments noted:

- Strategic Highways Department should be doing this kind of work anyway.
- Following extensive consultation with representatives from local community organisations, and with Traffic Assets in attendance, this proposal has come directly from the communities who identified traffic and speeding issues as problematic across the area.
- Why is this coming to the DVP for funding if it would normally be done by Traffic Management? The response was that Traffic Management, like other departments within the Council, will have a limited budget and unfortunately not everything can be funded. Therefore any extra projects, that are not within their budget allocation, may come in via the AAPs.
- Some smaller highways projects have been funded through the Councillor's Neighbourhood Budgets.

- Who determines what areas the money will be spent in? The response was that the full application would give details of where the money would be spent following further discussion with the community.
- The SID (which highlights the speed you are travelling) is considered more effective in reducing speed than a VAS (gives a smiley face or frown depending on speed travelling).
- To obtain the cost of a SID and to consider purchasing two of these, which can be rotated across the area, rather than purchasing one VAS.

The Board APPROVED to fund the Traffic and Management Project at a minimum cost of £68k.

The Task Group would like to address issues across the DVP area in both Consett Town Centre and in the surrounding villages. Therefore £110k is to be allocated to the Speedwatch and Traffic Management projects, as approved above, leaving £100k for town centre focused schemes.

Health and Wellbeing Task Group

The task group met recently and agreed to continue with the themes within their action plan for 2022-24. A proportion of the Area Budget (AB) has been allocated to the task group and will undergo a call out for projects that aim to address mental health issues, suicide prevention, social isolation and bereavement support.

Environment Task Group

Unfortunately due to a very low attendance (due to apologies) at the last task group meeting, the action plan has yet to be updated and agreed. A further task group meeting is to be arranged. The group are also waiting for more information from DCC regarding zero carbon.

Employment, Enterprise and Training Task Group

The task group met recently and updated their action plan for 2022/23. Themes included in their action plan are identifying gaps in provision around employability and skills; encouraging and supporting job creation opportunities; promoting and creating apprenticeship opportunities and identify local training and skills needs.

Due to a low response for project proposals from the call out in 2021/22, the group have decided to develop projects and to target specific project deliverers rather than do a call out for projects. However, the group may consider projects that may come in if they fit the themes as above.

Further to the recommendations from the task group at the May Board meeting, the group would like to recommend to the Board that they fund the following project:

Consett Air Training Corps, IT equipment to deliver STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) activities. This is a joint project with Stanley AAP (full amount £18,251) with a request to the DVP for £9,125.50.

The Board APPROVED to fund the Consett Air Training Corps project at a request of £9,125.50 which would come out of the task group's 2022/23 budget allocation.

6. Area Budget Funding Call for Projects 2022/23

At the last Board meeting Fiona gave an update on the funding available for the DVP in 2022/23 and that the Board also agreed to retain the three priority task group of employment, environment and health.

In June, Fiona sent an email to Board members, which included a copy of the DVP Funding Processes report, to determine a mechanism for allocating the DVP's amalgamated budget of £119,902 for 2022/23. The Board were asked for their approval to split the budget equally between the three task groups (amount to be determined following the outcome of the Christmas event) and for each task group to do an open call out for projects. The Older People's Social Isolation Fund (OPSIF) of £25k would also form part of the call out.

This is so the call out could be promoted on the front page of our Derwent Valley NEWS (DVN), which needed to be signed off in early July (as taking it to the July Board meeting would have been too late). The DVN will be delivered to over 20k homes in the DVP area in August.

There was no opposition received from the Board and Fiona thanked them for their support to do a call out.

The call out will be promoted through our normal channels, eg social media, our networks, etc and will be launched next week, with a closing date for completed project proposals by 30 August 2022. Received applications would initially be reviewed by each respective task group against their action plan, and then recommendations would be made to the DVP Board accordingly.

7. County Durham Partnership Forum Event (7 June 2022)

Due to the Board meeting running over, Mark Clelland was unable to give an update on the County Durham Partnership Forum Event. Fiona advised that the update was mainly around the AAP Review which Board members were given information about previously. Regarding the review of the AAPs, consultants have been appointed and they will be attending AAP Board meetings.

Mark advised that information from the event can be circulated to the Board.

8. Meeting Close and Date of Next Meeting

Before the meeting closed, Fraser enquired why the call out for the T&V has ended and the others are still open. Fiona advised that the T&V has a different process with separate criteria. Meetings for the T&V Task Group have been ongoing since 2021 and the group agreed to a call out in April 2022, which ended early June.

Fraser said he was not aware of the DVP until the end of 2021 and felt that as a community member he should have been made aware of the DVP. He also thinks that communication needs to be improved. Fiona agreed that we need to be better at communicating with the wider public and we are always looking for ways to improve this.

Fraser proposed that the T&V call out should be reopened. Fiona advised that the call out had closed and invited Fraser to attend the next T&V Task Group meeting.

Mark thanked everyone for their attendance. The next Board meeting will be on Wednesday 28 September 2022 at 6pm at The Salvation Army Hall, Consett.