

# DERWENT VALLEY PARTNERSHIP (DVP) AGM BOARD MEETING MINUTES

22 May 2024, Salvation Army Hall, Consett at 6pm



## **Present:**

### **Elected Representatives**

Cllrs Veronica Andrews, Stephen Robinson (outgoing Vice Chair/newly elected Chair), Kathryn Rooney, Michelle Walton and Alex Watson.

### **Partner Organisations**

Mark Clelland (outgoing Vice Chair) (Derwentside Trust), Allan Hobson (Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS)) and Joanne Waller Durham County Council (DCC).

### **Public Representatives**

Helen Marley, Lea McConnell (outgoing Chair) and Rosemary Morris (newly elected Vice Chair).

### **DVP**

Corinne Walton (AAP Co-ordinator), Lynn Dougal (Support Officer) and Laura Sloan (Community Development Project Officer).

### **Members of the Public: 8**

**Presenter:** Paul Davies, DCC

### **Apologies:**

Elected Reps: Cllrs Kevin Earley and Watts Stelling. Partner Rep: Donna Tunney (newly elected Vice Chair) (The Hub). Public Reps: Linda Acres and John Marshall.

## **1. Meeting opened by the Coordinator**

Corinne Walton welcomed everyone to the AGM meeting and went through housekeeping.

Board members introduced themselves and apologies were noted as above. Paul Davies was welcomed to the meeting as he was giving a presentation. There were no declarations of interest.

## **2. Minutes of Previous AGM Board Meeting (24 May 2023) and Board Meeting (20 March 2024)**

*24 May 2023*

*Matters arising*

P3. Regarding an issue raised with DCC regarding the Link2 bus service, via the Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Task Group, John O'Connor (Forum) said that no consultation has taken place or any improvements made about the service. He asked if this could be looked in to.

Lea McConnell added that there has been no update from transport and another Bus Board meeting is on 4 June where this is proposed to be discussed.

Corinne advised that the team would contact officers in the DCC Transport team to obtain an update, and offer the opportunity for them to attend a future Board meeting to update on the Link2 bus service.

*20 March 2024*

*Matters arising*

P8. Regarding the retail premises on Middle Street, there is no further update from Cllr Alan Shield. However, Corinne advised that the premises have been purchased by a different organisation (not by County Durham Christian Life Centre) and could possibly be a furniture shop.

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

### **3. Derwent Valley Partnership AGM and Annual Report 2023/24**

*Annual Report 2023/24*

Corinne advised that the Annual Report is in development and awaiting the outcome of 2 project proposals (under Agenda item 5) before completion. The report will include projects that have been funded through the DVP's Area Budget, local Councillors' Neighbourhood Budget, Fun and Food Fund and Towns and Villages funding. Once the finalised report is available it will be emailed to Board and Elected members and available on DCC's AAP webpages at <https://www.durham.gov.uk/derwentaap>.

*AGM - Announcement of DVP Board Vice Chairs and Chair for 2024/25*

Each year at the AGM the Board decides on new Vice Chairs and the rotation of Chair takes place. Corinne thanked the outgoing Chair, Lea McConnell and outgoing Vice Chairs, Mark Clelland and Cllr Stephen Robinson for taking on these roles and for their contribution to the Partnership over the last 12 months.

Nominations for Vice Chairs were received and AGREED as follows:

Rosemary Morris - Public Representative  
Donna Tunney - Partner Representative  
Cllr Stephen Robinson - Elected Representative

As the position of Chair rotates to the Elected Rep category, Cllr Stephen Robinson was nominated and AGREED as the new Chair.

#### 4. Partner Update

*Paul Davies, Customer Services Operations Manager, DCC gave a presentation on the Customer Access Points (CAPs) Consultation*

The presentation gave an overview on the 8 CAPs in County Durham, the proposed changes to them and how to get involved in the consultation (a copy of the presentation can be provided upon request).

Demand for face to face services in the CAPs has been reducing over a number of years. People mainly use the CAPs for support with Blue Badge and bus pass applications. Around 52% of appointment slots go unused across the county with Consett CAP on average using only 36% of its appointment slots which is on average about 10 people per week. The aim is to reduce the CAPs' opening days to one day a week, with the proposed day for Consett CAP being a Wednesday.

DCC would like the public's views on the proposed changes through the online consultation, available at <https://www.durham.gov.uk/consultation>. Paper copies of the survey are available in CAPs and libraries.

The deadline for feedback is 5pm, Sunday 28 July 2024.

The responses will help DCC understand more about where face to face services are needed. A report will be presented to Cabinet for agreement by December 2024.

The following comments/questions were noted after the presentation:

- The staff in Consett know the area and some of their customers. Where will those staff go, will they be made redundant, would staff from elsewhere come to work in Consett who may not know the area and not able to answer customer's questions, or will there be certain staff just visiting the different areas?  
The staff currently at Consett would stay there for the proposed one day. On the other days they could be placed in 'pop up' locations if demand arose. Currently no staff are at risk of redundancy and staff would be placed across the customer service function as and where required.
- The CAP building in Consett is rented by DCC and it was felt that a decision had already been made to close Consett CAP and move it into the library where it would be available one day a week. Therefore, anything in the consultation is not going to help Consett.  
Although this is under consideration, there is no specific decision made as yet. Paul was unable to comment as the idea to relocate services in to the library was not part of the consultation.
- Are there any plans to go out to the outlying villages/have a mobile CAP?  
This is asked in the consultation about what locations you would like to see us in.
- How will people find out about the consultation if they are not online?  
As well as being available online and on social media, there has been a press release, it is in Durham County News, presented at AAP Board meetings and in CAPs and libraries.
- Where do people go who are not online, find it difficult to use a telephone and/or turn up on foot, when they need help/have an emergency/signposted to when Consett CAP is closed?

Currently in this area, when Consett CAP is closed, Stanley CAP will be open and vice versa and assistance is available via telephone Monday to Friday. However, we would need to see what comes out of the consultation in terms of what is required.

- Have the limited bus services in this area impacted on the number of people going into the CAP? The low numbers attending the CAP may be because people cannot get there. Possibly but unable to say for sure. Generally, the CAPs countywide are underutilised.
- Will the service provision be at a better level for those who ring the CAPs, i.e., hard of hearing and are home visits being considered? Home visits are not offered currently. The consultation does ask if there is anything that we do not offer currently that you would like to see offered.
- Have you considered using Teams for people to access the service, e.g., at the library or Glenroyd House? This can be considered as part of the survey. We have a service in the CAPs called SignVideo for those that need extra help.

Cllr Robinson thanked Paul for the presentation and his input at the meeting.

## 5. Community Resilience Task Group update

Corinne gave an update on the newly formed task group which had their first meeting on 17 April 2024.

The meeting was well attended, and the main topic of discussion was around agreeing the themes under the community resilience heading. The task group agreed on the following themes to focus their work on:

- Welfare
- Community safety
- Children and young people
- Environment
- Employment
- Health and wellbeing
- Social isolation (aimed at residents over the age of 50)
- Community support (to include information sharing, communication, strengthening volunteer capacity).

The group also received and reviewed 3 project proposals linked to previously agreed 2023/24 ringfenced monies for Employment, Education and Training (EET) and Health and Wellbeing (HWB).

Based on specific themes within the Employment and Health priorities, the task group would like to recommend to the Board the following 2 project proposals for funding:

1. **Engineering and Manufacturing Network:** Reducing present and future employment skills gaps in the Derwent Valley. Funding request of £16,545.

A collaboration between employer/educational providers to create a centralised information resource to link and promote training, apprenticeship, and skill development opportunities

with potential job vacancies.

There were no comments and the Board APPROVED to fund the Engineering and Manufacturing Network £16,545 from the 2023/24 Area Budget.

2. **If U Care Share:** Suicide prevention awareness raising and training. Funding request of £8,530.

Providing support to businesses, organisations and adults to enable them to promote positive wellbeing to improve mental health and prevent suicide.

A Forum member asked if the phrase 'prevent suicide' could be changed and the focus made more on self-harm and suicide awareness.

John O'Connor (previously HWB Chair) said that the terminology used by the national suicide prevention is 'reduction in suicide'. In this area suicide rates are about 40% above the national average, with a lot of people self-harming which affects people's lives. If U Care Share presented at the last HWB Task Group meeting and they have such a depth of knowledge and expertise on this subject.

Cllr Walton said she was very impressed with If U Care Share and the approach they have. For such a harrowing subject they spoke candidly about the issues around suicide and the work they do will make a difference.

The Board APPROVED to fund If U Care Share £8,530 from the 2023/24 Area Budget

The next task group meeting will be on Wednesday 5 June at 6pm in Glenroyd House. Everyone is welcome.

## 6. **DVP funding 2024/25 update**

### *DVP Budget*

The DVP has additional monies to spend in 2024/25 due to a number of underspends being identified. Therefore, the budget for 2024/25 will be £225,406 and is made up of:

- £90,000 Area Budget
- £10,000 Youth Fund
- £10,000 Poverty Action
- £60,995 Department for Education (DfE) funding for Fun and Food programmes for free school meal children
- £30,246 UK Shared Prosperity funding for Fun and Food programmes for non DfE eligible children
- £10,000 Public Health funding for the Big Arts Project
- £2,251 underspend from Older Person Social Isolation Fund (OPSIF) 2019/20 budget
- £4,958 underspend from OPSIF 2022/23 budget
- £6,956 underspend from Contingency Fund 2023/24 budget (due to an applicant not submitting a funding application)

A total of £7,209 is available for OPSIF projects (targeted at projects/activities for those aged 50+) and the Board were given the option how they wished to spend this. The following 2 options were put forward:

1. Offer the OPSIF funding to an existing OPSIF project. Recommendation based on monitoring and current success/delivery would be Consett Memory Makers (formerly Dementia Friendly Choir). Should the Board agree to this option, Consett Memory Makers would have to apply for the funding through normal funding procedures.
2. Add the OPSIF funding (with specific OPSIF criteria) to the wider project call out to seek proposals from other organisations.

Cllr Walton said that she has heard from local residents that Consett Memory Makers is a huge success and they have had a bigger impact on the community than they intended. Although she would normally like to see funding open to all, she proposed that the Board consider supporting option 1 (offer funding to Consett Memory Makers).

There were no objections and the Board APPROVED the OPSIF monies of £7,209 to Consett Memory Makers.

Corinne advised that Consett Memory Makers will be asked if they wish to apply for the funding and if yes, they will need to complete their current end of project monitoring before being asked to apply through the funding application process.

#### *DVP Project Call Out*

The DVP Board agreed to a call out to spend its Area Budget (includes Area Budget, Youth Fund, Poverty Action and Contingency Fund underspend) and this was scheduled to take place on 7 June 2024. Shortly before the Board meeting commenced today, we were made aware that a General Election will be held on 4 July. Therefore if the Board are in agreement, the call out can go out early tomorrow morning before we receive official announcement of the election. Once DCC officially announce the election, we enter into the pre-election period (known as Purdah), which means we cannot promote the call out until 5 July, after the election.

Corinne advised that the call out documentation (expression of interest form and guidance notes) is already prepared should the Board agree to an early call out, however they can choose to hold off until after the election. The next task group meeting on 5 June may still go ahead as long as no decisions are made but official guidance will be received relating to this in due course.

Cllr Walton suggested that they go ahead with an early call out, even sending it out after the Board meeting, as she felt that community organisations/groups will be aware of the opportunity to apply for funding.

The Board AGREED to an early call out which Corinne will endeavour to get out later this evening.

## **7. The Big Arts Project proposals**

Corinne went through the Big Arts Project proposals, that Board members received prior to the

meeting.

All AAPs received £10k from Public Health for projects that promote good mental health through culture and art. The DVP call out for projects went out in April and by the deadline date of 30 April 2024, we received 6 expressions of interest totalling £24,430 (oversubscribed by £14,430).

1. CBS Theatre Group, The Fully Monty production, £2,500
2. Consett Heart, Art at Heart, £2,800
3. Consett Rugby Club, Consett and District Rugby Club Centenary Timeline Collage, £5,000
4. DCC Arts and Culture Team, The Lodge Open Art Studio, £3,080
5. Karbon Homes Silver Talk, Silver Friends - Power of Friendship, £2,850
6. Villa Real School, Together We Learn, Together We Grow: Occupations Then and Now, £8,200

The Board then discussed the proposals with the following comments noted:

- giving them all a proportion of the fund, providing they can run their project for less than they have asked for
- the minimum funding allocation is £2,500 therefore all the projects cannot be given a share of £10k
- a reduction in funding may reduce the quality of the project, particularly the Villa Real project
- consider using the Councillor's Neighbourhood Budget to top up the shortfall
- to give CBS, Consett Heart, Consett Rugby Club and Silver Talk an equal share

Following the discussion, Corinne summarised the outcome:

CBS Theatre Group, Consett Heart, Consett Rugby Club and Silver Talk would each receive £2,500. No funding would be allocated to DCC or Villa Real School. We will contact the applicants to advise them of the outcome and ascertain if the successful applicants can deliver their project with the reduced funding, where applicable.

Projects are to be displayed in community facilities during the week of World Mental Health Day (7–13 October) with a final project report shared with Public Health and the DVP Board in November.

Regarding the Villa Real School project, Cllr Robinson said that the DVP Councillors will support this project through their Neighbourhood Budgets. Corinne also stated that the two unsuccessful projects could be included as part of the project call out process and funded that way potentially.

## **8. Consett Town Centre Events Programme update**

£35k (£8k Christmas in Consett 2023, £4k Consett BRASS Festival 2024, £15k Consett Summer Festival 2024 and £8k Christmas in Consett 2024) was allocated to the Town Centre events programme from the DVP's Towns and Village Fund.

The first event was Christmas in Consett which was held in December 2023.

Consett BRASS Festival (in conjunction with DCC's Durham BRASS) is planned for 12 July 2024, 6-9pm in Middle Street, Consett (subject to confirmation). The event includes Consett Salvation

Army Brass Band, international brass acts, circus skills and a whole host of entertainment. More details and publicity to follow in due course.

As Consett BRASS Festival and other events are scheduled for the summer, ie Consett Music Festival and the Family Fun Day at Consett Rugby Club, Corinne suggested to the Board that the Consett Summer Festival 2024 is delayed until June 2025 to coincide with the return of the Consett Cycling Festival.

Christmas in Consett 2024 is in the planning stage and more information will follow in due course.

John O'Connor (Forum) gave an update on the Consett Cycling Festival and said negotiations are taking place with British Cycling to secure a 3 year contract (2025-2027) to hold the event in Consett. The festival element will be organised through A H Events and procedural documentation is ongoing with DCC. He advised that he has been in contact with Corinne regarding financial support from the DVP, particularly in the first year, as everything has to be secured for the 3 year contract by the end of July 2024.

Cllr Robinson said the event is quite high profile as SKY TV are there and top cyclists in the country compete plus it helps put Consett on the map.

The Board agreed to ringfence the funding from the summer festival 2024 and for it go towards a summer festival in 2025 linked to the cycling activities.

On another note, DCC has awarded a specialist markets contract to Bacchanalia who will be responsible for setting up bespoke specialist markets in 11 County Durham towns, including Consett. Further details to follow in due course.

## **9. Meeting Close and Date of Next Meeting**

Cllr Robinson thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The next Board meeting will be on Wednesday 17 July 2024, 6pm at The Salvation Army Hall, Consett.