

**3 Towns Partnership Board Meeting**  
**6pm on Thursday 10 November 2022 at Crook Civic Centre**

**PRESENT:**

**Partner Organisations**

Gordon Elliott  
Liz Bradley  
Graham Tomaszko  
Sgt Grant Cockerill  
Helen Ward  
Jill Matthewson

**Public Representatives**

Jay Conlon  
Allan Coleman  
Mary Hall  
Fiona Nicol  
Robbie Rodiss  
David Dixon  
Chris Ebdon

**Elected Members**

Councillor Richard Manchester, Durham County Council  
Councillor Anne Reed, Durham County Council  
Councillor Mike Currah, Durham County Council  
Councillor Olwyn Gunn, Durham County Council  
Councillor Paul Stokes, Tow Law Town Council

**Co-opted Members**

**Officer Attendance:**

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

**Presenters:**

Eleanor Ince and Isabel Ince – Jack Drum Arts BOP Fest  
Gordon Elliott – 2023/24 County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation

**Public Attendance:**

4 members of the public were in attendance

**Apologies:**

Cllr Patricia Jopling, Cllr Fraser Tinsley, Cllr Margaret Elgie

**A1. Welcome and Introductions**

**MH** opened the meeting and thanked the Board for attending.

## **A2. Agreement of minutes from the previous meeting 7 July 2022 – Matters Arising**

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

## **A3. Local Neighbourhood Issues**

### **Neighbourhood Budget Applications and Neighbourhood Budget Report**

**NW** gave an update on Neighbourhood Budget and explained all reports have been circulated electronically and there are no applications to be discussed at the meeting.

## **A4. Priorities and Action Plans**

### **Action Plan and Project Updates**

**II** and **EI** a presentation around BOP Fest. Board members commented on how well BOP fest had been executed and how well the presenters did.

**GC** updated the Board on the Community Safety Task Group that took place in September 2022. The Board were informed that operation endurance had seized 5 bikes in the Willington area and 7 people have been prosecuted with fines and court action. Members of the public are encouraged to report these crimes, so police are aware, and they are on the system for future reference.

**GC** confirmed police are aware of issues with the 101-system raised at the Task Group. **GC** confirmed that in 2015 there was 70,000 calls to 101, however, in the last 12 months there was 277,000, 4 times the number of calls than previously reported.

The Board were informed that 101 allows direct contact to an officer also. To do this you need to call 101 add 20 then the officers collar number and this will put you in direct contact with that officer. The average call answer time was 2 minutes and 18 seconds, although they are aware there are reports of some people waiting 1 hour plus.

**GC** stated that police are looking to bring in a contact management system. 50% of calls that they receive are non-police matters. There has been a suggestion to improve the service by having relevant questions being asked prior to being put through to call handlers to eliminate those non-police matter calls.

The Task Group suggested a call back system, where rather than waiting in a queue to speak to 101, you leave the call and the place is held in the queue, when you reach the front of the queue you will receive a call back, this is being looked into.

Police did explore the potential of sharing the Crook station direct number, however, senior leadership did not support this idea. Call handlers are trained to answer the calls to 101, moving this to the station would then require a trained member of staff to be on the phones at all times which is not feasible.

Another suggestion from the Community Task Group was to create a list of all available defibrillators in the 3 Towns Area. The Board were informed the 3 Towns AAP are currently working on this and will have 2 separate lists consisting of defibrillators available 24/7 and those only available during opening hours of the venues which hold them. This is due to be published shortly. The next Community Safety Task Group will take place before Christmas, date to be announced.

A question was raised regarding how often defibrillators are used in the 3 Towns area. A suggestion was made to contact NEAS for figures and to publish what current information the AAP's have for defibrillators in the area.

**GC** explained there had been a pilot in other areas of County Durham where youths were trained in the use of defibrillators and it had been a success, suggestion to train some youths in 3 Towns. Concerns were raised around misuse of the defibrillators; however, it was confirmed having done training they cannot be misused.

**ACTION – AAP to publish current information regarding defibrillators. JM to contact NEAS for figures of defibrillator use in the 3 Towns.**

**SD** informed the Board of the recommendations from the Community Safety Task Group, which were projects to provide a drone, section 59 signage and ANPR cameras. The potential projects were explained to the Board.

### **Section 59 Signage**

Section 59 signage will allow police to forgo giving a warning to those using vehicles (including bikes, e scooters, cars and more) illegally or in an antisocial manner. The signs mean that these can be seized immediately when signs are displayed, rather than issuing a warning with the notice to seize on the next offence. These signs will be attached to fences and posts and in full view. Antisocial behaviour relating to bikes has been an issue across the 3 Towns, these signs could help instil public confidence. It is proposed there will be approximately 50 signs in 3 Towns areas. Costings range from £561 to £681.50 depending on how many signs are bought together across the force.

The second part of this project is a drone for Crook Police. Drones have proven to be a more cost-effective way of policing and have a much smaller cost than the police force helicopter which is approximately £5,000 per flight. Drones can be much safer to use situations such as rivers where it may be hard to deploy personnel safely. They can also help with evidence for prosecution and can be used alongside other critical services. The costs are £7,333 include training of personnel and insurance for 3 years. The total of both projects would be £8,014.50.

Concerns were raised regarding the Police need to approach the AAP for funding of projects and were there other drones available for the force to use. Questions were asked regarding the signage and whether it is needed and what permissions are needed to display these.

**GC** explained that they were approaching the Crime Commissioner for funding help also, so this could reduce the amount of funding requested from the AAP. Durham Constabulary do have drones available, however, these are not town policing specific, therefore they can only be used when the drones and pilots are available. By acquiring their own, Crook police will be able to deploy a drone instantly. Having the signs will save double handling of perpetrators and eradicate having to give warnings as legally a warning needs to be given, whether that is verbal or via a sign. Signs will be placed in trouble areas, and this has been trialled in other areas of County Durham, where it has received positive feedback. Police will need to consult with DCC to check the placement of the signs.

A discussion was had, and questions were raised about the project. **GC** confirmed the drones will only be used on a job per job basis and they cover a much larger area than can be covered on foot. A suggestion was made to publish the policy and procedures for public access to reassure them. The project is for 3 years, although they anticipate the drones to last longer than this. There will be 2 people trained for the drones who will work opposite shift patterns to ensure a wider coverage. The removal of signs would be something that would need to be dealt with at the time.

**SD** informed the Board of the potential ANPR project. The proposal is for 2 new site cameras, 2 replacements and 1 mobile camera to be used in various ways. Costs have increased slightly since

last year and the project is asking for £15,500 from the Board. There is £12,600 of match funding for the project. A similar project has been funded in Teesdale and Weardale through their AAPs.

**Board agreed to funding both projects.**

**Towns and Villages Task group**

**MC** and **JA** updated on the Towns and Villages task group. The Board were informed there is £210,000 to be allocated in the 3 Towns area. The task group identified that traffic is a key issue in all areas. A meeting has already taken place in Howden-Le-Wear and there is an upcoming meeting in Stanley Crook in the next few weeks. Traffic officers from DCC are looking at proposals from the Howden-Le-Wear meeting in August to be followed by a second meeting in early December to feedback. This feedback will be presented in an update at the next Board meeting in January 2023.

A suggestion was made to add salt boxes to the Towns and Villages project proposal for areas that don't have this provision, such as bottom of hills, bends on roads etc. This not only benefits motorists but also the public on foot.

**SD** gave an update on the call for projects. The AAP initiated the call out in September, there have been 9 applications for the theme of community recovery totally £127,941 with associated match funding of £233,014, giving a total cost of projects of £360,955. The initial call out figure was agreed as £118,859.39 and £40,000 was set aside for recommendations from the Community Safety Task Group and any emerging issues. The total combined pot for allocation is £158,859.39.

Including the section 59 signs, drone and ANPR projects this would leave £135,344.89 for the call for projects. The 9 projects currently total £127,941 (£9,081 over the callout figure) however the funding is available if the Board decide to fund all 9 projects. This would leave £7,403.89 to still be allocated.

There was also a call out for Healthy relationships funding of £10,000 however no applications were received. Other AAPs have brought organisations to work together across provisions to create a project for this fund. Suggestion for the Board to go out with another call out, with a shorter turn around, or to bring in other organisations to create a project for the fund.

Board agreed to another callout if this is unsuccessful to then look at involving other organisations.

**ACTION – AAP to create another Healthy Relationships callout.**

**SD** gave a projects update:

- **WIFI** – This project is delayed due to the hardware required; it is now on hold until March 2023.
- **Glenholme Park CCTV** – This project is delayed due to several issues. A new electricity supply is needed which was not thought to be an issue when the project was submitted. The department that would do this has sourced and is willing to cover these costs. However, another issue is the lighting in Glenholme isn't sufficient for the CCTV, therefore new lighting will need to be installed. The issue is who will take on the revenue costs and the costs of decommissioning after the 5 years. Currently awaiting updates on this.
- **Young Carers Charter** – The AAP staff attended a training event for this project and were awarded young carers charter.
- **Targeted Holiday Activities** – This project is from 2019. They approached the AAP with an underspend of £133.22. There was a suggestion for project change of buying necessary

hygiene products to use this underspend. As this is a change in project it needs to be brought to the Board.

**Board agreed to the change in use of funding.**

**JC** updated the Board on the children and young people's youth panel. There have been 5 expressions of interest to be on the panel and the AAP are currently arranging a preparation/training day before Christmas. It is anticipated the grants will be marketed over the Christmas holidays and there is a potential for 10 grants to be funded.

**SD** updated the Board on Fun and Food. The AAP had 6 projects applied over summer with a grant total of £21,160. All projects were well received with positive feedback and good engagement from young people. There were some additional projects that were funded via the Fun and Food central pot across several AAPs and included the 3 Towns area. There are 5 projects over Christmas totalling £6,666.85.

Across County Durham in the Summer there was:

- 20,777 children engaged in activities
- 47% of those were eligible for free school meals
- 1,345 of those had SEND
- 62,855 meals were provided
- 222 providers delivered 2,379 sessions.

A discussion took place surrounding Fun and Food. The organisations involved were thanked. The Board were informed there had been some negative comments regarding the funding process, however this is not something the AAP has control over. A comment was made regarding a lot of home educated children accessing this provision and it has been invaluable for them to socialise as this is something they can miss out on not attending school. It was suggested that some organisations who run mainly on volunteers have struggled with the requirements for paperwork after the activities have taken place, however, it is understood it is DfE funding and that this needs to be completed. A suggestion was made to make the process more streamlined and less time consuming.

**ACTION - SD to feedback the comments to the Fun and Food team.**

**GE** informed the Board that the ERS review of Community Engagement should be back by the end of the year, and this will be circulated accordingly.

The Board were informed that **PS** has more information from bus board following the last Board meeting, but this will be circulated electronically for Board members to respond to.

**A5. Countywide Partners**

**GE** gave a presentation on 2023/24 County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation.

Discussions took place around budgets and reducing thresholds, how these are not viable, and questions were raised about any reserves that are earmarked?

**GE** informed the Board that the general fund reserve is normally 5-7%, which is approximately 23-35 million. By the end of quarter 1 there was approximately £21 million in reserves, however, corporate management are trying to find the £10 million shortfall.

A suggestion was made that reserves are there for emergency situations and those out of the ordinary, therefore they should be used to help balance finances at this moment. However, another comment was made that if using the reserves what would happen if there was another emergency, such as the storms last year and there are no reserves to help with this, what would then happen?

Another suggestion was an alternative approach, for DCC to investigate sourcing and outsourcing costs. An example was given of foster carers. Some DCC foster carers are recruited through an outsourced agency, moving these services in house could potentially save costs. Looking at other areas would also help. A comment was made regarding a new DCC residential children's home in County Durham.

A statement was made that if DCC was a registered charity, they would not be allowed to sit on reserves. The use of reserves has been scrutinised and corporate management should use them over the next 12 months. The consultation only discusses 4 elements relating to the budget cuts, but there could be other ways to do this also. A query as to why DCC is still supporting the council tax reduction scheme when other councils have unadopted this. Another £600,000 is set aside for cultural venue at DLI, should the council be committing itself to revenue costs at this time? DCC should be looking at venue costs and potentially saving from closing offices which are no longer needed due to reduced staff numbers and staff adopting working from home. This could be a potential to save money. It is the council's responsibility to balance the budget.

Board members were encouraged to complete the budget survey.

**ACTION – AAP to circulate the link to the online survey.**

**A6. Date and time of next meeting**

**6pm on Thursday 19 January 2023 via Teams**