

East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership Minutes of the
Board Meeting
Tuesday 22 November 2022
(Virtual Meeting - held via Microsoft Teams)

Present: Cllr Gary Hutchinson, Cllr Jan Blakey, Cllr Chris Varty, Cllr Maura McKeon, Cllr Chris Lines, Cllr David Brown, Christine Carter, Allan Blakemore, Stuart Dunn, Tim Dredge, Dave Tempest, Mark Readman, Insp Sarah Honeyman, Tony Cutmore, Angela Stobbart, Malcolm Gray

Presenter: Dave Smith – Trimdon Grange Community Centre

Officer Attendance: Jane Bellis – AAP Co-ordinator
Claire Craft – Community Development Project Officer
Emma McLoughlin – Community Development Project Officer (Towns and Villages Team)
Marie Ainscough – AAP Support Officer

Forum Members: 4 forum members attended the meeting

Apologies: Mel Carr, Kester Noble, George Storey, Parish Cllr Sandra Dowson

1 Introductions and Apologies

Cllr Chris Varty (Chair) welcomed everyone to the virtual Board Meeting of the East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership and a round of introductions followed.

A special welcome was offered to Tim Dredge, newly appointed Public Representative on the Board.

A warm welcome was offered to Dave Tempest, the Fire representative on the Board. This was Dave's first Board meeting. He reported that there had been problems with anti-social behaviour and deliberate fires in the AAP area however, he understood this had now been dealt with and was in hand. He highlighted that there had been an accidental fire at Bolams.

Apologies [see above].

The Chair highlighted that although the names of Board and Forum members are not included in the body of the minutes; advice given in relation to the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), is that the board minutes are made public, therefore should anyone wish to remain anonymous they were to state this.

Anyone present who had a conflict of interest in any item on the agenda was asked to declare an interest at the start of the agenda item to ensure this was formally recorded in the meeting minutes.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 September 2022 & Matters Arising

The Chair reviewed the previous minutes for matters arising, actions and accuracy.

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record subject to the following amendment -

- Fishburn Youth and Community Centre, Community Centre Extension – it had been suggested that the application be put through as staged payments which is something the task group had raised.

Matters Arising

4.1 Believe Housing Update

Kester Noble had asked if there would be environmental works carried out in the area. Angela Stobbart advised that there were no environmental works programmed in for this AAP area at present however there was likely to be in the future.

3 Countywide Partner Issues:

3.1 DCC Budget Consultation

Mark Readman delivered a presentation on Durham County Council's Budget/Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The current financial climate and the increases in inflation, energy costs and fuel prices are creating significant pressures on council budgets. An update on the Medium-Term Financial Plan set out a requirement to identify additional savings of more than £52 million between 2023/24 and 2026/27, with £37 million needing to be saved in the next financial year. This has added challenges to the budget setting process; however, a proposed approach had been developed on how the council will make some of these savings.

Durham County Council are consulting on a strategy of potential council tax increases, a range of savings proposals and the use of significant levels of reserves to balance the budget next year, which is a temporary measure and will only buy the authority some time to develop more sustainable budget solutions if no significant uplifts in Government funding is received.

On Monday 25 October, a four-week public consultation was launched asking members of the public to give their views on this proposed approach. Residents can take part in the four-week consultation by completing an online survey <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/28340/Consultation-on-our-budget-proposals-for-2023-24> or alternatively, by completing a hard copy which can be collected at one of the libraries or Customer Access Points.

The consultation will close for comments on Tuesday 22 November, however feedback from AAP Board meetings held after this date will still be gathered. Feedback from the budget consultations will be taken to Cabinet in January 2023 and a budget report will be presented to Cabinet on 8 February 2023. The Cabinet budget proposals will then be presented to Full Council on 22 February 2023 where budget approval and Council Tax for 2023/24 will be set.

Further work is underway to identify further budget savings to meet the shortfall expected for the MTFP 2023/24 - 2026/27 and further extensive consultation in 2023 to help formulate the council's budget plans for 2024/25 and the MTFP 2024/25 - 2027/28.

The meeting was opened for discussion/questions –

- Is the cap on adult care costs still going ahead?
- Due to the cost-of-living crisis, increasing council tax would be very difficult for some people and I'm sure they will be thinking about other ways in which the Council could make savings. Has there been any thoughts around fixed penalty notices? The powers of issuing parking tickets on zig zag lines outside of schools is the responsibility of the Council. I think this would massively impact on road safety and would also bring money in.
- Enforcement cars are used in other authorities, camera on top of the car and goes around school routes and takes pictures of people parking illegal especially yellow zigzags.
- In relation to social care, how much evidence have you got that the frontline services are going to be reviewed/cut and the impact that this will have on keeping people well.
- Has the organisation looked internally and asked its staff to come up with ideas and thought of a way that money can be saved?
- What is the impact on a short gain, is that taken across the whole life of the business plan of 10 years for eg or longer?
- Has DCC looked at outsourcing some services?
- AAPs make a huge difference in rural parts of the county bringing officers closer to people/consultations out and I plea to officers and all county councillors, in my view the AAPs are an area that should not be cut. It is not a huge cost but an enormous value. I understand that very difficult choices must be made but ask that they are not made to AAPs.
- Increasing Council tax will affect so many people's lives. People are struggling and we are seeing this every day.
- Has there been any consultation with trade unions? I worry about stress levels of remaining staff. We need to be careful about how we retain staff and look after them as part of this consultation.
- We now have the children centres that are now becoming hubs, as part of their cuts they will be doing virtual things with the children. The whole idea of having the children's centres was to bring children together.
- Family hubs are a great idea. They are going to be virtual but are also going to offer more face to face and outreach. A blended offer going forward.

The Chair thanked Mark for his presentation.

4 Local Neighbourhood Issues (LNI)

4.1 Locality Policing Issues

Neighbourhood Insp Sarah Honeyman provided an update on local policing issues.

Update from Sgt Kevin Hall (Sherburn)

- They will be holding an annual Christmas Light Switch On and Carol Service event on Friday 9 December, 5.30 pm at Sherburn Road Police Station. Refreshments are available and all local residents are welcome to attend.
- The Halloween Party held last month at Ludworth Community Centre was a success with around 50 children attending. Kevin wanted to pay a special thanks to Dave Woods.
- Several staff will be leaving the team in the New Year to start new roles within the organisation. Since the summer there had been a hold on any vacancies. They will be recruiting again in April/May.
- He wanted to wish everyone a 'Happy Christmas and New Year to all'.

Update from Sarah Honeyman

- Sedgfield and the Trimdon(s) – two fully thefts and one attempted theft of a Ford Fiesta. The person whose vehicle it belonged to had left their credit card inside the vehicle and it was used to get petrol in the Wingate area and then used in a burglary. Arrests had been made in connection with this incident.
- An operation had been carried out in the rural communities helped by the Shildon team who worked until the early hours of the morning mainly on farm watch type operations.
- A force-wide Operation Trident had been carried out looking at crime patterns.

Update from Neighbourhood Insp Phil Carter (Peterlee Team)

- Everyone had been arrested in connection with the aggravated burglary in Trimdon. The main person had been detained.
- There had been a lot of engaging with the public and reassurance patrols.
- Christmas Tree Light Switch On, Saturday 3 December from 3 – 6.00 pm.
- Several shoplifters had been detained including the two highest shoplifters in the area and had been remanded for 46 weeks. Phil highlighted that this had nothing to do with the cost-of-living crisis.
- PCSOs had been doing an anti-bullying campaign at Deaf Hill and the Trimdon(s).
- Bonfire night – there had been an incident in Trimdon, and the investigation was ongoing. One male had been detained. One family had been affected, rehoused and were being fully safeguarded.
- The Remembrance Parade had been well attended.
- Reduction of 23.5% in neighbourhood crime (for the whole of the county)

- Detections of crime in Durham Constabulary are one of the highest in the country.

Cllr Jan Blakey thanked Phil for the work he had done on licensing. She highlighted the number of burglaries that had taken place over recent weeks in Bowburn, Quarrington Hill and Kelloe and asked Phil if he could put a safety notice on social media to remind the community to be aware during the dark nights. Sarah to take this back.

She also raised her concerns about a Facebook post in relation to a vulnerable adult that had gone missing in Houghall. Phil said he would highlight this in a morning meeting to get a response.

5 Priority Updates (from Task Group and Projects)

5.1 Christmas 2022 Fun and Food

Four applications were received, 1 of which withdrew; the three projects listed below were agreed by Board members via email -

- ATOMS CIC, Christmas Crackers with ATOMS - £980.00
- STARS Community Learning CIC, An Enchanted Experience - £2,792.00
- Trimdon Community College Association, Festive Food and Family Fun - £1,109.06

5.2 Area Budget and Healthy Relationships Funding

[Stuart Dunn declared an interest in the Future Leisure in Coxhoe application]

[Tony Cutmore declared an interest in The Cornforth Partnership application]

- Walk & Talk Trust, East Durham Rural Community Heritage Walks - £9,600.00 (Area Budget)

Board members agreed to fund the project, subject to receiving satisfactory responses to the queries raised.

- The Cornforth Partnership, Girl Empowerment - £10,000.00 (Healthy Relationships Fund)

Board members agreed to fund the project, subject to receiving satisfactory responses to the queries raised.

- Future Leisure in Coxhoe (FLiC), Active Life Solar Panels - £35,000 (Towns and Villages Fund)

Emma provided an overview on the project and highlighted questions had been raised in the task group meeting. She had been in touch with Ellie Grimes who had provided some good advice.

No comments were raised; and the project was approved.

Jane said she had made progress in relation to the email she had sent to the community centres in our area on Energy Bills/Energy Efficiency Measures and the impact this was having on them. She had met with Ellie Grimes and a technical colleague from the Climate Change Team who had a contact that could do a 'light touch' in the community centres with a view to looking at this in more detail in the New Year.

5.3 Trimdon Grange Community Centre (TGCC) Project Update

Dave Smith from Trimdon Grange Community Centre provided a verbal update on the Centre Developing Project. The organisation had received funding from the AAP and the project is now complete.

It was good to hear that the funding for Trimdon Grange Community Centre had made such an impact and had helped immensely during the storms.

6 Co-ordinator's Report

Quarterly monitoring returns are available to Board members upon request.

There was no update on the Review of Community Engagement. Positive feedback had been received and the AAP team had been involved in focus groups.

Jane explained that she had had conversations with Ally Walker re IT connectivity problems in the AAP area. There were lots of technical issues and massive costs involved. Jane to keep the Board updated.

7 Neighbourhood Budget Projects

The following Neighbourhood Budget projects were shared with the Board –

Name of Scheme: Life Saver - Defibrillator
Councillor(s): Lucy Hovvels / Jake Miller / Chris Varty
Interest Declared: No
Amount: £1,398 (£466 each)

Name of Scheme: LED Lights
Councillor(s): Jan Blakey / Gary Hutchinson
Interest Declared: Yes, Chair & committee member
Amount: £2,100 (£1,050 each)

Name of Scheme: Speed Humps
Councillor(s): Jan Blakey / Gary Hutchinson
Interest Declared: No
Amount: £10,800 (£5,400 each)

Name of Scheme: Hardwick Park Forest School Youth Project

Councillor(s): David Brown / Chris Lines
Interest Declared: No
Amount: ££3,210 (£1,605 each)

Name of Scheme: Parkhill Festive Lights
Councillor(s): Maura McKeon
Interest Declared: Yes, Parish Councillor
Amount: £4,282

The Board was happy for these projects to go ahead and the interest as declared.

8 [Date and time of next board meeting](#)

Date and time of next meeting – Wednesday 25 January 2023, 5.00 pm at Fishburn Youth and Community Centre

Subsequent Meetings

- Wednesday 22 March 2023

The Chair wished everyone a Happy Christmas and New Year and thanked the AAP team Jane, Claire, and Marie for all their hard work.

Everyone was thanked for their attendance and the meeting closed.