



Better for everyone

**GREAT AYCLIFFE & MIDDRIDGE PARTNERSHIP (GAMP)
MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2023 (6:00PM)
NEWTON AYCLIFFE YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE**

PRESENT:

Cllr Eddy Adam – DCC, Cllr Jim Atkinson – DCC (Vice Chair), Cllr Neville Jones – DCC, Cllr Ken Robson – DCC, Cllr Michael Stead – DCC, Cllr Tony Towers – Midsridge Parish, Sue Cooke, Chris Hutchinson (Vice Chair), Peter Shovlin, Glenis Simmonds, Jeff Watson, Natalie Whitworth, Andy Coulthard – Livin Housing Representative (Chair), Insp Sarah Honeyman – Police, Oliver Sherratt – DCC Head of Service Representative, Malcolm Woodward – Fire Service Representative, Brian Riley – GAMP Coordinator, Paula Stockport – GAMP Support Officer, Angela Blanchard – GAMP Towns & Villages Community Development Project Officer

APOLOGIES:

Daniel Blagdon, Carol Gaskarth, Simon Hocking, Rosie Woodward, Victoria Grieves

OBSERVERS:

Mr B Adamson

Standard Board Meeting

1. Introductions & Apologies

AC opened the meeting, reminding Board members of the standard Declaration of Interest item on the agenda. AC welcomed two new Public Representatives to their first meeting, GS and JW. AC informed observers they would be welcome to comment under Items 3 and 4 on the agenda.

Apologies for absence had been received, as noted above, and a brief round of introductions was given.

2. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 18.7.23 – Matters Arising

BR confirmed that the draft minutes from the Board meeting held on 18.7.23 had been circulated in advance with the meeting papers; there were no outstanding actions.

There were no matters arising, and the minutes of the last meeting were **AGREED** by the Board as a true and accurate record.

3. Countywide Partner Issues

3.1 DCC Budget Consultation (Oliver Sherratt)

Board members received an update presentation in relation to the Council's current Budget consultation. The presentation gave an overview of the Council's budget for the current financial year, the Council Tax position, budget pressures, and the proposed approach for balancing the budget in 2024/25 and across the next four years.

The consultation asked the following questions of the AAP:

- What is the AAP view on our savings proposals for 2024/25, particularly the £3.7 million of savings derived from back-office savings and efficiencies, income raising and reductions in third party contributions and savings from changes in the way we deliver front-line services?
- What do you feel will be the impact of this approach to savings for 2024/25 upon you or those you represent?
- What is the AAP view on areas where the council should focus to achieve additional savings still needed for 2024/25 of £6.2 million and £43.5 million over the following three years? Please choose three services you would prioritize for funding reductions from the list to provided.
- What is the view to the council raising the council tax by the maximum amount of 4.99% to protect service provision and ensure the additional savings required are kept to £6.2 million for 2024/25? If you disagree with the 4.99% increase, go back to the list and please choose a further 3 services to reduce.
- Do you have any additional ideas as to where we can raise further income or become more efficient?

Questions/comments were invited from Board members and the following points were noted:

- Cllr KR believes that DCC should consider lobbying Government to remove the 4.99% cap to help get through the initial shortfall. Cllr KR commented that a high level of outgoings seems to be around social care/looked after people, e.g. buying properties and having high staffing levels for a small number of children being looked after, and believes this area needs more thought in terms of potential to achieve savings. In terms of scope to bring in additional income, Cllr KR believes that fines should be increased for people parking on footpaths. OS noted the point in relation to lobbying, DCC's politicians will have done an element of this. In relation to social care, the vast majority of funding is used to run existing facilities and adult care homes account for the biggest area of expenditure. DCC want our vulnerable residents to have access to decent and fit for purpose accommodation.
- OS understands that Insp SH is having ongoing discussions with DCC Neighbourhood Wardens around parking enforcement action.
- Cllr EA acknowledged that DCC are facing difficult decisions, and now dealing with additional pressures including high inflation, minimum wage costs and all associated costs, and it's now virtually impossible to look at achieving savings without having to look at cutting services – those that aren't essential/statutory. Has DCC thought about events like Lumiere, cycle events, Brass Festival etc – whilst these are no doubt important and people enjoy them, ultimately they aren't essential and will possibly have to be looked at. OS clarified that nothing is out of scope, especially in relation to non-statutory services. Events such as Lumiere have been shown through studies to generate a lot of income for the local economy and also contribute to other aspects of life, including tourism, putting Durham on the map etc, but all areas will be looked at.

- Cllr EA commented on the current proposal from DCC to reduce grants to Town & Parish Councils. GATC will lose £112k if the proposal goes through, which is a substantial amount for a local parish council to lose. This will result in GATC either having to cut services or increase their precept. This issue isn't just affecting Newton Aycliffe, it would impact on all Town & Parish Councils in County Durham, therefore drawing £1.5m from the local economy, but in reality ordinary people will have to pay the price for any reduction in T&PC grants. Cllr EA would request that this is looked at again, and would propose a phased process over longer period.

OS encouraged all Board members to complete the online survey as part of the consultation process. Further information is available via:

[Consultation on our budget proposals for 2024-25 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2025-28](#)

The closing date for responses is 20 October 2023.

BR confirmed, for the minutes, all information circulated by email from the GAMP team since the last meeting:

- Long-term Empty Property and Second Homes Council Tax Premium Consultation (20.7.23);
- Quarter 1 Project monitoring update reports (21.7.23);
- GAMP ebulletin (8.9.23).

BR reminded partners to get in touch if they need space on a future meeting agenda.

AC commented that Livin representatives used to meet up a couple of times a year with local Cllrs but these meetings fizzled out. It's proposed to reinstate these meetings with local members, probably on a quarterly basis, to encourage regular dialogue and discuss local issues. This suggestion was welcomed by Cllrs, AC will arrange for October time (**Action 1: AC**).

4. **Local Neighbourhood Issues**

4.1 Neighbourhood Policing Update

Insp SH updated Board members in relation to local PACT priorities, PACT meeting dates and current/emerging issues.

Insp SH gave a brief update on staffing; it's hoped that by the New Year the team should be back to 3 PCs and 5 PCSOs.

Insp SH gave a brief update on accommodation. The response team will hopefully have a temporary short-term base on the industrial estate. It is the Police & Crime Commissioner's long-term preference to have a presence in the Town Centre, but until such time as suitable premises can be identified, there will be a temporary base on the industrial estate.

Cllr JA commented that he would like to see a more robust system for fining people who commit offences, e.g. parking, which would go some way to helping generate income.

Cllr KR expressed concern that the Newton Aycliffe policing team will end up being relocated to the new building in Spennymoor.

Cllr MS noted support for the potential to locate the team temporarily on the industrial estate. If a hub is eventually established in the town centre this could be used for walk-ins, with the response team based elsewhere. Cllr MS would welcome further discussion on this with Joy Allen at a future GATC meeting.

Insp SH confirmed that a copy of her update report will be circulated with the minutes, for information.

5. GAMP Coordinator's Update

5.1 2023-24 Area Budget Update

BR confirmed that all of the successful project applications from this year's AB callout (x13) are now with our Funding Team and going through the technical appraisal process. We've already received 6 x grant offer letters, which is great and many thanks to the Funding Team, so some of the new projects should hopefully be starting quite soon. Board members will also start receiving quarterly monitoring updates on the new projects going forward once they're properly up and running.

BR will give Board members a full update on Area Budget, Neighbourhood Budget and Towns & Villages funding at the next meeting; there was very little change in relation to NB and T&V since the last update.

5.2 Community Engagement Review

BR gave a brief update in relation to the Review. Work has been taking place over the summer to look at the various workstream groups that will be needed as work on the Review progresses, looking at areas like Terms of Reference, wider governance and funding processes etc. BR highlighted that Gordon Elliott (DCC Head of Partnerships & Community Engagement) attended a recent meeting with Parish Clerks from across the County to give them an update on progress. BR will keep this on the agenda going forward so that any relevant updates can be given as and when.

AC commented, from an AAP Chair's perspective, that there's been very little engagement or feedback coming through in relation to the Review. AC proposed that he make contact with the Review Steering Group on behalf of the Board to request an update on progress. Cllr JA seconded this proposal. AC will arrange (**Action 2: AC**).

6. Date/Time of Next Meeting: Tue 28 November 2023, 6:00pm, Microsoft Teams

AC/BR thanked all attendees, and the meeting was closed.