

Notes of the Weardale Area Action Partnership Board Meeting – 20th July 2023



Eastgate Village Hall

ATTENDEES

Board Members

Public Representatives: Richard Lawrie (RL) – **CHAIR**
Alison Humble (AHU)
Stephen Thomas (ST)
Will Wearmouth (WW)
Caroline Ford (CF)

Partner Representatives: Damian Pearson (DP) – Believe Housing
Adam Heslington (AHE) – Fire & Rescue Service
Insp. Ed Turner (ET) – Durham Constabulary
Julian Haynes (JH) – Voluntary Sector
Jeff Bell – Business Representative
Sarah Lee (SL) - Health

Elected Members: Cllr Anita Savory (AS)
Cllr Helen Barrass (HB) – Muggleswick Parish Council
Cllr Olive Wilson (OW) – Witton-le-Wear Parish Council
Cllr David Sugden (DS) – Wolsingham Parish Council
Cllr Joan Carrick (JC) – Stanhope Parish Council

Officers Angelina Maddison (AM)
Tracy Edwards (TE)
Fiona Barber (FB)
Bill Lightburn (BL)

Presenters Mike Allum.

APOLOGIES

Public Representatives: Kevin Roddam
Adrian Holden

Elected Representatives: Cllr John Shuttleworth

Partner Representatives: Michael Kelleher - Durham County Council

BOARD MEETING

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. A welcome was extended to new Board member, Joan Carrick, who takes over from Angela Hawkes as the Stanhope Parish Council representative.

Introductions were made and apologies recorded as above.

2. Declaration of Interest

The Chair asked that Board members declare any interests as they arise on the agenda.

3. Agreement of Notes from Board Meeting held on 18th May 2023 and Matters Arising

The notes of this meeting, as circulated, were **AGREED** and confirmed as a true record by those present.

There were no matters arising.

4. Presentation:

Housing Strategy Principles and Priorities Paper Mike Allum (MA), Spatial Policy Manager

MA advised that a new consultation has begun regarding the Principles and Priorities paper. The consultation will end mid-August to take part visit: <https://www.durham.gov.uk/thehousingconversation>

A copy of the presentation is held on file – if you would like us to send you one, please contact the WAP office at weardaleaap@durham.gov.uk

The Board were invited to make comments and to ask questions:

- The need for bungalows – particularly in Weardale – was raised. MA confirmed this is an issue across the county and is addressed within the programme. AM added that there is an additional identified need for adapted bungalows.
- Query as to how the plans for a Combined Authority will affect future decision-making. MA advised there is already funding for brownfield sites in the pot.
- Query whether DCC are considering raising Council Tax on second homes as other counties have done. MA advised that the Council Tax team are currently consulting other departments on this topic.
- Is consideration being given to making homes warmer and healthier given the difficulties faced by residents in rural areas with stone built properties. MA advised that fuel poverty, single-skin properties etc are all issues that are under consideration.
- MA confirmed that DCC are currently performing at 100% against the previous targets as planning permission is not granted unless it meets the necessary conditions.

- MA confirmed that one of the principles under consultation concentrates on linking with social care provision and allowing people to remain in their own homes with support and adaptability.
- MA clarified that ensuring housing developments link with other requirements e.g. roads, schools, health services falls under the remit of the County Durham Plan. New developments must pay to offset any costs on other services e.g. increasing school or class size.
- MA also advised that the temporary accommodation budget has rocketed with an overspend of hundreds of thousands of pounds. He advised that some new builds will be put aside, and existing properties acquired for use as temporary accommodation.
- In response to a query on the success of selected licensing, MA advised that 11/12,000 landlords are now registered and more will come into the system in time. The process is self-financing as landlords pay £500. An observation was made that the quality of tenants and properties has dropped which added to the £500 fee and other rising costs has become problematic for landlords. MA advised that selected licensing is expected to be a rolling project with the potential for continuous benefit.
- MA confirmed that three new areas have been identified across County Durham for new social housing properties.

MA also gave feedback on the Rural Development Opportunities event held recently in Mickleton. MA advised that the event had been well attended with good discussions in the following areas:

- The sustainability trap – planning policy tries to direct development to where facilities already exist. Creates a problem when an area needs housing but does not have the required facilities – especially in rural areas.
- Infrastructure and Public transport
- Broadband – links to employment/schools/colleges accessibility of training courses
- Looking at existing building re-use not just new builds
- Community-led housing development
- Farming and diversification

MA advised that the report will be circulated to attendees soon and AM asked if this could be forwarded to Board members.

The Chair thanked MA for his presentation and update.

5. Weardale Action Partnership Update

Social Enterprise Boost Durham Programme

AM advised that a pot of money is available to help Community Interest Companies (CIC's) transition into Community Interest Organisations (CIO's).

She talked Board members through a short presentation on the subject – a copy of this is held on file - if you would like us to send you one, please contact the WAP office at weardaleaap@durham.gov.uk

6. Towns & Villages Funding Update

BL gave a short presentation on the status of Towns & Villages funding in the Weardale AAP area. He advised that the deadline for having this funding allocated is looming and additionally that his contract will end in March 2024.

- Ashcroft MUGA – Stanhope Parish Council (£32k - approved)
- Muggleswick Church Camping Project – Muggleswick with Edmundbyers PCC (£50K - earmarked)
- Weardale Way Works – North Pennines AONB (£50K - earmarked)
- Killhope Interpretation – Killhope Lead Mining Museum (£27K - earmarked)
- Weardale Christmas Lighting Infrastructure – DCC Highways (Details & price TBC)
- Weardale Play Area Refurbishments (Options will depend on available budget)

Update on Projects

Ashcroft MUGA (Stanhope Parish Council)

- Landowner approval (DCC) & Licence for site access (Believe Housing) both issued, TVF grant released.
- Parish Council has appointed SSL to manage implementation phase.
- Tender package released to Contractors - 11th July. Closing date - 9th August.
- Contractor appointment scheduled for w/c 17th August with exchange of contracts by end August.
- Parish Council has requested that on-site works be carried out between 11th September and 3rd November.

Muggleswick Church Camping Project (Muggleswick with Edmundbyers PCC)

- Planning application for building works submitted - 5th July.
- Diocesan Faculty Permission at public consultation stage - ends 1st August.
- An outline business plan for Church camping submitted in support of the application to the DCC Community Resilience Fund
- Successful outcome will mean further applications can be submitted to national funding bodies (Benefact Trust, NCCT and others)
- £5K grant received from Partners in Community Action (PICA) NE Fund
- New potential funding opportunity flagged by DCC Economic Development Team through Rural England Prosperity Fund (DEFRA Fund)
- Informal valuation obtained for sale of St Matthews Church, Waskerley (proceeds from which would support the project). Preliminary work to formalise the sale is with the Diocesan Registrar (solicitor)
- Informal connections are being made with local schools and wider networks (through the Project Consultant employed by the RCfE Project) - to start to raise local awareness and build prospective local audiences.
- Reminder - Project has been given a 31st August deadline to demonstrate that it is achievable, and can be supported within the Towns & Villages programme timeline

Cllr AS noted that two County councillors from Lanchester Ward had recently visited the project and shared their visit via social media. She stated that she had not been aware of the proposed visit and it was usual practice to notify another County Councillor when crossing into their area for such a visit. BL apologised if

there had been any unintentional oversight and noted that the church sits within the boundary of the Lanchester ward whilst also sitting within the Weardale AAP area. HB noted that both Councillors had been contacted a year ago regarding the project but had not shown any interest.

RL queried whether WW had been able to arrange for a letter of encouragement from the relevant MP to be sent. WW confirmed that it had.

AM lauded the Muggleswick Church Camping project and praised HB for her diligence in seeing the project approach commencement. She stated that, if successful, this project will help similar buildings throughout Weardale and Teesdale.

Weardale Way Works (North Pennines AONB)

- Advisory meeting held with AONB project lead on 19th July.
- No problems envisaged – anticipate a full application by mid/end August.

Killhope Interpretation (Killhope Lead Mining Museum)

- Advisory meeting held with Killhope project lead on 20th July.
- No problems envisaged – anticipate a full application by mid/end August.

Christmas Lighting Infrastructure Frosterley & Crawleyside (DCC Highways)

- Site meeting held at Frosterley on 13th July (all stakeholders represented)
- Requirements discussed, understood and agreed by all parties.
- Management arrangements for Frosterley are clear.
- LUTD to clarify same for Crawleyside.
- DCC Street Lighting preparing firm estimates for works at both locations.
- Long lead in times mean the intent would be for DCC Highways (Street Lighting) to apply for funding this year for infrastructure improvements to be carried out in preparation for Christmas 2024

Weardale Play Area Refurbishments

- Outline costs held for potential reserve/mop up project.

Timeline

All projects have been advised of the timelines to be worked to so that the Board can confirm funding in September.

Approved

Ashcroft MUGA

Progressing to full application

- Muggleswick Champing
- Killhope Interpretation
- Weardale Way Works
- Christmas Lighting – Durham County Council

7. Area Budget Overview

2023/24 Area Budget - £100,000

Application circulated by email - for ratification by Board

- **Close Knit Community £5,000 – ST declared an interest**

The project was discussed; no additional comments or conditions were made.
Email circulation prior to meeting – APPROVED by Board.

TE noted that the group had been vocal in their praise of the WAP Team and Funding team for turning around the project so quickly.

Application for Board Approval

The Story Train £19,515 – AS declared an interest.

It was clarified that the licensing reference referred to the Legionella testing. Safeguarding – TE confirmed that all volunteers would be getting an enhanced DBS check as part of the project.

TE noted that comments had been received regarding costings being too high. She advised the project management fees had reduced drastically but that this had a knock-on effect of raising the number of admin days. She also advised that discussions have taken place to look at lowering the contingency allocation even further.

WW asked whether 200 new users was achievable – AM commented that they have excelled previous targets in Fun & Food projects. WW offered to be a Board Ambassador for the project.

AM asked the Board if they would be happy to approve the application with some small tweaks being made before submission - **APPROVED by Board.**

8. Other WAP Funding Streams

Fun & Food

AM stated that although our projects hit the targets required, it would be preferable that more children in receipt of Free School Meal's (FSM's) could access the provision. AM reminded the Board of the difficulty we have in targeting these children as we are unable to know who they are.

Board members were asked to promote summer activities in their local areas – posters were provided to each member.

ST offered to be a Board Ambassador for The Story Train Fun & Food project.

Cllr AS stated that Dean Tinkler who is involved in the Summer Boxing Fitness in Stanhope is like the Pied piper and forecasted that this would be a huge success.

OW stated that the kids love Witton-le-Wear Youth Club. Derek and Lynn are lovely and the kids are often seen running excitedly to tell people what they have been doing.

TE advised that applications for October half-term provision will open on 21st August.

9. Neighbourhood Budget

Cllr Savory

2023/24 Neighbourhood Budget

- Tables – Wolsingham St Thomas' Centre

2023/24 Small Grant Fund

- Hurdles – Eastgate Sheep Show
- Marquee – Wolsingham Parish Council

Coronation Fund

- Summer concert – Wolsingham Parish Council

Cllr Shuttleworth

Neighbourhood Budget

- No current spend

Small Grant Fund

- No current spend

Coronation Fund

- No current spend

10. Neighbourhood Issues

Friends of Frosterley Primary School and DCC Highways

Cllr AS advised that an agreement has been reached to install better signage and additional markings in the vicinity of Frosterley Primary School. She also advised that the Police have visited the area, and this has helped. She advised that she will be pushing for completion prior to the new term.

11. Countywide Partner Issues

None raised.

10. Dates and Times of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Weardale Action Partnership Board will take place on Thursday **7th September at 6:00pm – venue TBC.**

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.