

East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership Minutes of the
Board Meeting
Thursday 23 November 2023
(Virtual Meeting - held via Microsoft Teams)

Board Members

Attendance: Cllr Jan Blakey, Cllr David Brown, Cllr Chris Lines, Cllr Maura McKeon, Cllr Gary Hutchinson, Angela Stobbart, Sgt Daniel Lake, Tony Cutmore, Mel Carr, Tim Dredge, Stuart Dunn

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

Presenters: Jeff Garfoot – Head of Corporate Finance & Commercial Services, Durham County Council
Steph Rich – Senior Policy Officer, Durham County Council

Forum Members

Attendance: 4 forum members attended the meeting

Apologies: Sarah Honeyman, Mark Readman, Christine Carter, Cllr Chris Varty

1 [Introductions and Apologies](#)

Angela Stobbart, Chair welcomed everyone to the online Board Meeting of the East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership (EDRC AAP) and a round of introductions followed.

A warm welcome was offered to Steph Rich and Jeff Garfoot from Durham County Council who were presenting at this meeting.

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 21 September 2023 & Matters Arising

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3 Housing and Homelessness Strategy

Steph Rich – Senior Policy Officer, Durham County Council delivered a presentation on the above. The purpose of this presentation was to provide an overview of the vision and principles of the draft Housing Strategy and the key points and priorities of the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and to obtain feedback as part of the joint consultation on the draft strategies.

Consultation for both draft strategies run until 18 December 2023. You can provide feedback on the Housing Strategy and/or the Draft County Durham Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy online at www.durham.gov.uk/consultation email your comments to thehousingconversation@durham.gov.uk or at any of the council's Customer Access Points and libraries.

The meeting was opened for discussion –

- A County Cllr highlighted that landlords were selling their properties due to tenant's anti-social behaviour to be rid of the problem and help the neighbourhood. She knew of 4/5 sizable families that had been made homeless because of this.
- A forum member who had commented on the Housing Strategy, said he would be looking at issues around sustainability, location, and green space.
- A comment was made in relation to the vast increase of immigrants.
- A Board member representing Believe Housing mentioned the housing stock in County Durham was very old both privately owned and social housing. In terms of energy efficiency Believe Housing were retrofitting a lot of their properties to make them more energy efficient. She also highlighted that they were doing a lot of work around damp wall and condensation which is a big issue largely because the properties are old. The North-East Housing Partnership – what are you doing and other local authorities, is there a partnership vision and is everything aligned and moving in the same direction?
- A forum member provided some technical information around the level of insulation.

4 Local Neighbourhood Issues (LNI)

4.1 Locality Policing Issues

In the absence of Neighbourhood Insp Sarah Honeyman, Sgt Daniel Lake provided an update on local policing issues -

Update from Sgt Kevin Hall (Sherburn)

- Off road bike action for previous month – completed.
- Police Cadet event completed successfully in Ludworth Community Centre
- Christmas Carol event 8th December
- Bowburn Sports and Social Club anti-social behaviour and drug dealing is ongoing with effort to tackle and reduce reports.

Update from Neighbourhood Insp Phil Carter (Peterlee Team)

- 2 large cannabis grows located with £500k worth of cannabis seized, with one male remanded.
- 7 shoplifters progressed with 20 detected crimes, seeing 2 of the suspects remanded before the courts.
- CCTV installed worth £40,000 supported by the AAP, which will assist NPT with reducing ASB and crime.
- OP Trailblaze is ongoing and seeing a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

Update from Sgt Dan Lake

- A cannabis grow with £100k worth of cannabis was recovered and male remanded and put before the courts
- Trimdon Village Hall anti-social behaviour reports has reduced after suspect has been progress to young offenders.
- A Burglary spike has been a reduced after the suspect has been identified and progress for CPS decision.
- Continued work with Sedgefield Community College to reduce the issues around sexting and sexual education.

Jane highlighted that the AAP had a pot of £10,000.00 for healthy relationship projects and the EDRC AAP had funded The Cornforth Partnership some time ago to work with Sedgefield Community College to go into the school and talk to the pupils about healthy relationships; however, Tony Cutmore had had problems getting into the school. It was suggested that Tony and Daniel make contact outside of this meeting to talk about this and what we can do about it.

Concerns were raised in relation to the police response in the Bowburn area, arsons, traffic issues in Parkhill, lack of police involvement, railings on the motorway bridge, a van that was regularly parked on Crowtree Lane which was causing an obstruction, the sighting of an individual with a crossbow at Bowburn Services and 20mph speed zones being enforced in Coxhoe. Daniel said he would feed this back to the appropriate team and agreed to get further information and feedback at a future meeting. Jane made Daniel aware that the AAP had funded a community speed watch scheme some time ago.

5 Community Engagement Review

Jane informed Board members that there was nothing substantial to report on. She will continue to update as progress is made.

6 Priority Updates (from Task Group and Project Leads)

6.1 Area Budget Projects

Board members had received a project proposal summary on each of the following projects prior to the meeting. At the task and finish group meeting held on 7 November 2023, task group members recommended that the applications be brought to this board meeting for wider consideration. 6 applications totalling £95,299.77 were received by the closing date.

[Stuart Dunn declared an interest in the following item of business]

❖ Re-Powering Coxhoe Village Hall – Coxhoe Village Hall Association

An application had been received for £10,176.37 towards a total project cost of £16,683.57.

It was noted that the original costs had been reduced considerably and that the parish council were contributing.

The Board was happy to support this project and it was approved.

❖ Community Success – Hinson Wellbeing & Fitness Centre CIC

An application had been received for £25,523.80 towards a total project cost of £30,523.80.

The task group recommended that this project was not progressed as the applicant had not responded to the queries raised or submitted their supporting documents. Concerns were also raised with the project in relation to awareness that there were providers already delivering free training.

The Board agreed with the task group's decision and the project was not approved.

❖ Rose Cottage Community Warm Space Food Hub – Rose Cottage Community Hub CIC

An application had been received for £8,907.00 towards a total project cost of £16,587.00.

Task group members raised concerns that people from out of the AAP area may be attending, therefore reducing the places for residents of the AAP. It was agreed that the applicant would be contacted and asked to set up a registration process to ensure most attendees were from the AAP area. In addition, the applicant was given information on external pots of

funding, and advised if they hadn't secured the match from Crowdfunder then they could tap into these.

The Board was happy to support this project and it was approved.

❖ Fighting Loneliness Through U3A Activities – Sedgefield and District U3A

An application had been received for £6,800.00 towards a total project cost of £8,700.00.

The task group were pleased to see an application from a group who hadn't approached us before and highlighted a few opportunities for future funding and free trips which were communicated to the group for future reference.

A colleague from the Wellbeing for Life service advised that she had referred into this organisation and said that there was a need to support the elderly. Jane said she would get in touch with her colleague in relation to social prescribing to this group too.

The Board was happy to support this project and it was approved.

[Cllrs Gary Hutchinson, Jan Blakey and Maura McKeon declared an interest in the following item of business]

❖ Coxhoe - Linden Grove Park Refurbishment – Durham County Council

An application had been received for £32,000.00 Area Budget and £20,000.00 Towns and Villages Fund.

Task group members suggested that we ask the applicant if the parish council could contribute £16,000.00 towards the cost of the project, but unfortunately this wasn't something the parish council could commit to.

The Board was happy to support this project and it was approved.

[Mel Carr declared an interest in the following item of business]

❖ Replacing Lighting in the Parish Hall - The Sedgefield Players

An application had been received for £11,892.00 towards a total project cost of £16,884.36.

The task group raised no questions in relation to this project.

The Board was happy to support this project and it was approved.

There was now a balance of £14,290.41 Area Budget remaining.

Jane advised that conversations had been held with the Police and other partners, as an application form had been submitted by Durham Constabulary with regards to tackling anti-social behaviour in the Trimdons. There were queries on this form, and due to a major operation and staff shortages they hadn't been addressed. Due to the issue with anti-social behaviour and the many conversations had at the Board meetings on the subject; the task group proposed that this be brought to the Board to agree that the application could be finalised prior to re-launching the Area Budget Project Call Out.

Jane said she would be meeting with the applicant to iron out the issues. The funding would be used to tap into the trailblazer money and used for outreach youth work working in the community. Any ideas from Board members to build into this project were welcomed.

Board members were happy to agree this as a way forward.

6.2 Christmas 2023 Fun and Food

We received one Fun and Food application for Christmas 2023 totalling £1,899.00. There was £1,918.70 available for this holiday period.

❖ STARS Community Learning CIC – An Enchanted Experience

Claire met with the Fun and Food team on Thursday 16 November to discuss the application. As there was enough funding to cover the request, it was decided that a panel meeting was not needed.

The Board was happy to support this project and it was approved.

7 Countywide Partner Issues:

7.1 Medium Term Financial Plan - Further Consultation

Jeff Garfoot – Head of Corporate Finance & Commercial Services, Durham County Council delivered a presentation on the 2024/25 County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation which included an update on the Council's medium term financial forecasts; the major reasons for changes to the financial forecast and impact and the additional savings options to help close the forecast budget shortfall.

The views of the AAP were sought on the following -

- Our proposed approach to balance the budget further has identified additional savings of £1.9 million in 2024/25 and £2.9 million across the four-year period from savings from back office and making efficiencies, raising additional income and changes to delivering frontline services – what is the AAP view on this approach?
- What do you feel will be the impact of this approach upon you, your communities or those you represent? – why do you believe this would be the case?

- Do you have any additional ideas or suggestions as to areas where we can raise further income or become more efficient in the years to come?

The deadline for feedback is 5.00pm on Sunday 3 December 2023. Feedback from both budget consultations will be taken to Cabinet in January 2024 with the budget report presented to Cabinet on 14 February 2024. Cabinet budget proposals will then be presented to Full Council on 28 February 2024 where budget approval and Council Tax for 2024/25 will be set. Work is underway to identify further budget savings to meet the shortfall expected for the MTFP 2024/25 – 2027/28.

The Chair thanked Jeff for his presentation and the meeting was opened for discussion –

- A Board member who had recently visited New York had noticed that homeless people were collecting plastic and metal and he was guessing they were doing some form of weigh in. Is this something we can do in County Durham? This is a cost saving in terms of collection and saves the service.
- We have a very strong voluntary sector within County Durham, great organisations who are working in communities who are linked to AAPs and who are keen to work in partnership. Communities are already seeing a negative impact from the last round of cuts and it's important that we can sustain some of the services. If the county council can't operate these services, can the VCS operate them on their behalf? The Cornforth Partnership would be interested to pick up conversation with someone within the county council to talk about the dispersed property programme, domestic abuse, and housing. Jeff recommended that Tony speak to Michael Kelleher, the Head of Housing re developing this.
- A comment was made around income generation and parking charges, and it was highlighted that even with the introduction or increase of parking charges, County Durham would have one of the lowest in the county. Depriving some income in a small way could mitigate some of the problem we are facing.

8 Co-ordinator's Report

Jane continued to attend countywide groups as well as local meetings and would update Board members as and when necessary.

9 Neighbourhood Budget Projects

[Cllr Chris Lines declared an interest]

The following Neighbourhood Budget projects were shared with the Board –

Name of Scheme: Bradbury Signage – DCC Traffic

Councillor(s): David Brown / Chris Lines

Interest Declared: No

Amount: £1,019.41

Name of Scheme: Deaf Hill New Miner's Banner
Councillor(s): Lucy Hovvels / Jake Miller / Chris Varty
Interest Declared: No
Amount: £11,000.00

Name of Scheme: Coxhoe, Linden Grove Park Refurbishment
Councillor(s): Jan Blakey / Gary Hutchinson
Interest Declared: No
Amount: £28,000.00

The Board was happy for these projects to go ahead.

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

Date and time of next meeting – Wednesday 24 January 2024, 5.00 pm –
Bowburn Community Centre

Subsequent Board Meeting Date

- Thursday 21 March 2024, 5.00 pm at Cassop Community Centre

Everyone was thanked for their attendance and the meeting closed.