



Minutes of the Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership Board Meeting

Thursday 23 November 2023

Microsoft Teams

Present

Partner Representative

Deborah Richardson (DR) - Community and Voluntary Sector Representative
Insp Mark Edwards (ME) - Durham Constabulary
Rachel Edmunds (RE) – Believe Housing – Vice Chair
Colin Davis (CD) - County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service
Paul Cooper (PC) – Durham County Council

Public Representative

Peter Quinn (PQ)
Jayne Nicholson (JN)
Nicola Craddock (NC)
Bob Simm (BS)
Bernadette Crooks (BC)

Elected Members

Cllr George Smith (GS)
Cllr Shirley Quinn (SQ) – Chair
Cllr Cathy Hunt (CH)
Cllr Samantha Townsend (ST)
Cllr Charlie Kay (CK)

Presenters

Paul Cooper (PC) – Head of Pensions - Durham County Council
Edward Pickering (EP) – Chief Officer – Citizen Advice County Durham
Michele Armstrong (MA) – Head of Volunteering at The Auckland Project

Officers

Andrew Walker (APW) – Senior AAP Co-ordinator
Emma Walton (EW) - AAP Support Officer
William Lightburn (WB) - AAP Community Development Project Officer
Peter Henderson (PH) - AAP Towns and Villages Team Community Development Project Officer

Apologies

Mark Jackson (MJ) – Durham County Council
Tony Bird (TB) – Public Representative - Vice Chair
Cllr Joanne Howey (JH) – Elected Member
Cllr Mike Harker (MH) – Town and Parish Council Representative
Sheilah Metcalfe (SM) - AAP Community Development Project Officer

Public / Other Attendees – 7**Board Meeting****A1. Introduction and apologies**

Introductions and apologies were made.

Please see page 1 & 2 for attendees and apologies.

SQ welcomed Board and Forum members to the meeting and presenters and introduced Inspector Mark Edwards as the new police rep on the BASH board and thanked Sgt Vikki Ord for standing in.

APW explained the protocol for Microsoft Teams Meetings this included:

- Attendees will be invited to speak by the Chair.
- All participants should mute their microphone if they are not speaking.
- Forum members were asked to turn their cameras off unless invited to speak by the Chair.

- If attendees would like to speak this should be done by using the raise hand function or alternatively the chat function. Board members will be invited to speak first followed by members of the forum, where appropriate.
- When finished speaking lower your hand and remute your microphone

A2. Agreement of minutes and matters arising from previous meeting held 21 September 2023

SQ complimented EW on the quality of the Board meetings.

JN highlighted a typo on page?

The Board agreed the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

A3. Declaring an Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A4. Local Neighbourhood Issues

➤ Citizen Advice

Board Members received a presentation from Edward Pickering (EP) – Chief Officer – Citizens Advice County Durham on Citizens Advice. In the BASH AAP area Citizens Advice sessions are available at the 4 Clocks Centre, Bishop Auckland Town Council Offices, the Goodall Centre and at Shildon Town Council Offices. EP reported on the key statistics, outcomes and issues for the BASH area.

EP gave an overview of the Durham County Council Poverty Action Steering Group Cost of Living project that started in January 2023. The project involves Citizens Advice, Durham Christian Partnership, East Durham Trust and Age UK. The top areas of need, countywide, include Woodhouse Close, Bishop Auckland Town, Shildon & Dene Valley and West Auckland.

Further information on citizens advice and the volunteering opportunities are available via the website: <https://www.citizensadvicecd.org.uk/help/>

The Board made the following comments:

DR raised concerns that the drop-in service at the 4 Clocks Centre is no longer available. SQ highlighted this is also the case for the sessions at Shildon Town Council offices. EP reported that sessions are available by

appointment only. EP stated that those individuals that attend the 4 Clocks Centre without an appointment can leave their contact details for a member of the Citizens Advice triage team to get in touch.

CD offered Bishop Auckland Fire Station as a potential venue to host Citizen Advice sessions. This was welcomed by EP.

APW offered the support of BASH AAP.

SQ thanked EP for the presentation.

➤ **Auckland Project Volunteering**

Board Members received a presentation from Michele Armstrong (MA) – Head of Volunteering at The Auckland Project on the volunteering opportunities available at The Auckland Project. MA gave an overview of the Auckland Project’s mission, vision, volunteering opportunities and choices available. Prior to volunteering essential training is required, this can take place online and can be recorded via an app.

Volunteering opportunities are also available at Weardale Railway and 11 Arches. The next open call for Kynren is Sunday 14 January 2024, 10 – 11.30am at the 11Arches, Bishop Auckland.

The Board made the following comments:

CD highlighted that the fire service holds an apprenticeship scheme and suggested linking in with the volunteering opportunities available.

ST commented positively on the volunteering opportunities available and the variety of ways to become involved. ST thanked MA for the positive work that has taken place.

SQ thanked MA for the presentation.

➤ **Durham County Council Budget Consultation**

Board Members received a presentation from Paul Cooper (PC), Head of Pensions – Durham County Council on the 2024/25 County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation.

PC gave an overview on the previous medium term financial forecasts and provided an update on the revised forecasts. The deterioration in financial forecasts and the additional saving plans to assist in balancing the budgets were highlighted.

PC stated that the total savings needed at this stage for 2024/25 to balance the budget is now estimated to be £16.308 million around £4.2 million more than was previously forecast. Across the next four years, the total savings required are estimated to be £67.602 million around £11.6 million more than was previously forecast.

A total of £5.878 million of savings have already been approved, of which £2.332 million can be delivered in 2024/25. Cabinet agreed additional saving proposals of £3.7 million for 2024/25 and £6.617 million in total across the budget planning period, at its meeting in July 2024. Cabinet have now approved further saving proposals of £1.943 million in 2024/25 and £2.909 million across the four-year period for consultation.

PC referenced the savings that AAPs will need to make as part of this MTFP process.

The Board were asked to comment on the following questions:

- 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?

PC stated that the consultation is live. The deadline for comments is 5.00pm on Sunday 3 December 2023. Feedback from the budget consultation will be presented to Cabinet in January 2024 with the budget report being presented to Cabinet on 14 February 2024. The budget proposals will then be presented to Full Council on 28 February 2024 where budget approval and the council tax for 2024/25 will be set.

The Board made the following comments:

CK raised concerns with the potential loss of the County Durham News. PC stated there is a proposal for the County Durham News to move to an online format to generate savings.

ST raised concerns with the level of change and cuts, to deliver a front-line service, and the impact of these. ST stressed the importance of the AAPs within the community and the support provided to local organisations. This was echoed by SQ. SQ highlighted the importance of AAP funding in supporting the local communities and urged for the AAP budgets not to be cut. SQ expressed her fears about the potential impact on further cuts and the ability to cope.

BS asked what the impact is on visitor numbers when introducing car parking charges. PC stated it is a balancing act to maintain visitor numbers whilst introducing car parking fees. However, stressed that there are significant budget gaps to be met.

BS raised concern with the level of returns on the investments made across the County. The investment in Eldon and Coundon Grange area was highlighted, and concerns raised regarding an increase in the number of empty houses and fuel poverty. BS raised concerns with outcomes not been met and suggested recursive action be taken with investors. CD stated that if housing is not secured, properties are at a higher risk of arson. PC recommended feeding these concerns into the consultation process.

Board and Forum members were encouraged to respond to the consultation. Further details in relation to the consultation are available via the website: [Consultations - Durham County Council](#) . All comments from today's meeting will be fed into the consultation process.

SQ thanked PC for the presentation.

A copy of the presentations are available by contacting a member of the BASH AAP Team on bishopshildonaap@durham.gov.uk or 03000 268663.

A5. Priorities and Action Plans

- **Area Budget - Community / COVID Recovery**

APW reminded the Board that at the November Board meeting they agreed to approve £126,211 Area Budget funding to 8 projects. Each project will be at various stages of development, regular updates will be provided to the Board.

APW informed the Board that due to underspend in previous years an additional £5,321 Area Budget is now available to allocate of which £4,000 must be allocated to a capital project. Through the call for projects Aclet Close Nursey had applied for £10,000 however due to limited funds the Board only approved £5,986. APW recommended the BASH team works with Aclet School Nursey to align the underspend to this project. This was agreed by the Board. The revised application will be circulated to the Board in due course.

APW highlighted that Woodhouse Close Church Community Centre has received 3 grants in the last 2 years. The church has received funding towards the day clubs, grief and bereavement sessions as well as the building extension. The extension is nearly complete and will be officially opened in the New Year. APW shared feedback and photographs from the teams recent visit and commented positively on the fantastic work taking place at the centre.

SQ commented positively on the work that is taking place at Woodhouse Close Church Community Centre. This was echoed by CH.

➤ **Holiday Activities with Healthy Food**

Funding has been secured from Durham County Council for holiday activities with healthy food during the school half terms. BASH AAP has been allocated £46,156. The funding available is to be allocated in 2023/24 and is for the February, May, October, and February 2024 half term periods.

The last round of funding was for the October half term. Following a call for projects each application was assessed and considered by the funding panel which agreed 8 applications to the project value of £14,125.80. The following projects were supported:

- Little Chefs Big Chefs - LCBC Half Term Activities
- Angel Trust - Angel Trust - Trick or (Tr)Eat
- Stars Community Learning - STARS Science Mystery
- Wear Rivers Trust - Autumn Crafts and Campfire at Binchester

- Eldon Community Partnership - Eldon Half term fun and fitness
- Daisy Arts - Fall into ART : Autumn Creativity for Young People
- King James 1 Academy - Multi Sports Course at King James with AJ Sports
- Eric Unites - Oct 2023 Half term fun and food

BL reported that the October monitoring is not yet complete, however if participation targets are met the programme will have engaged with 370 separate children and young people.

To date £33,781.05 has been allocated. This leaves a remaining balance of £12,374.95 for the February 2024 half term holiday period.

In addition, Durham County Council has secured funding from the Department for Education to continue to deliver holiday activities with healthy food during the school holidays. Individual allocations to AAPs were based on the number of free school meal eligible children and child poverty rates for 5 –15 year olds. BASH AAP has been allocated £90,273. The funding available is to be allocated in 2023 and is for the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods. To date £72,397.05 has been allocated. This leaves a remaining balance of £17,895.95 for the Christmas holiday period.

BL reported that the latest round of funding was for the Christmas holiday period. Following a call for projects 7 applications were received, totalling over £12,000. Each application will be assessed and considered by the funding panel who will meet on Tuesday 28 November 2023, 10.30am. An update on the projects supported will be provided at a future Board meeting.

BL stated that in total 44 projects have been supported across each school holiday periods for 2023.

SQ commented positively on the range of projects supported and the opportunities this funding provides children and young people.

➤ **Towns and Villages Revitalisation**

Board Members received a presentation from Peter Henderson (PH) - AAP Towns and Villages Team Community Development Project Officer on the Towns and Villages Revitalisation funding.

PH reminded the Board that BASH AAP had an additional £210,000 funding to address the priority of Towns and Villages over 3 years. In addition, elected members also received an additional £10,000 each to address Town and Villages Revitalisation. PH gave an overview of the projects supported through AAP Towns and Villages and the Councillor's Towns and Villages Budget. These funds have now been fully allocated.

KW thanked PH, APW and SQ for the support with the Eldon and Dene Valley ASB project. SQ congratulated the parish councils, KW and PH on the work taking place with this project.

BS highlighted that the original project in Eldon and Dene Valley included the purchase of decorative boardings for 15 houses and asked whether the funding could be realigned. KW confirmed the boards are no longer required and with the agreement of the AAP this funding can will be reallocated to another element in keeping with the spirit of the project. PH confirmed this. However, KW reported that due to DCC restrictions this funding cannot be used to purchase another CCTV camera. BS suggested the funding could be used to purchase gates at the end of the back lanes to prevent fly tipping. KW stated the parish council's will be provided with an update.

BS thanked KW and PH for the work that has taken place. This was echoed by JN.

➤ **Neighbourhood Budget**

There were no neighbourhood budget applications presented at tonight's meeting.

A6. Coordinators Update

Due to time constraints, there was no Coordinators update.

A7. Countywide Partner Issues

➤ **Police / PACT Update**

Insp Mark Edwards gave an update on the main priority issues for the BASH AAP area.

- Drop-in sessions continue to take place at Bishop Auckland Police station.
- ASB remains an issue at Eldon and Eldon Lane.
- There have been several horse related crimes. Work is ongoing to deal with this issue.
- A new chief inspector, a chief constable and a neighbourhood warden will be in place in due course.
- There has been an increase in vehicle crimes.
- BS asked if the Police link with Durham Police and Crime Commissioner Joy Allen. ME confirmed that regular engagement takes place.
- BS reported that £1m worth of funding has been secured through the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner's Office to improve safety in public spaces across the county's rural and urban communities.

ACTION – EW to circulate Insp Mark Edwards email address with the minutes for any further information or enquiries.

A8. Date / Time / Venue for next Board Meeting

SQ thanked Board and Forum members for attending the meeting.

Board - Thursday 25 January 2024, 4pm, Bishop Auckland Football Club