

Notes of the Weardale Area Action Partnership Board Meeting – 30th November 2023



Online via Microsoft Teams

(Note: Venue previously confirmed as Eastgate Village Hall but changed to online due to a Met Office Yellow Weather warning being in place.)

ATTENDEES

Board Members

Public Representatives: Richard Lawrie (RL) – **CHAIR**
Alison Humble (AHU)
Stephen Thomas (ST)
Caroline Ford (CF)
Adrian Holden (AHO)

Partner Representatives: Damian Pearson (DP) – Believe Housing
Insp Ed Turner (ET) – Durham Constabulary
Jeff Bell (JB) – Business Representative
Sarah Lee (SL) – Health
Julian Haynes (JH) – Voluntary Sector
Dan Wootton (DW) – Fire & Rescue Service
Michael Laing (ML) – Durham County Council

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

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

APOLOGIES

Public Representatives: Will Wearmouth
Kevin Roddam

Elected Representatives: Cllr Anita Savory
Cllr John Shuttleworth

Partner Representatives: Michael Kelleher - Durham County Council

Officers Fiona Barber

BOARD MEETING

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made and apologies recorded as above.

2. Declaration of Interest

The Chair asked that Board members declare any interests now or as they arise on the agenda. The following declarations were made:

- HB – Muggleswick Church Camping Project
- JH – Weardale Community Partnership

3. Agreement of Notes from Board Meeting held on 19th October 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. Presentations

Draft County Durham Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Mike Allum (MA) talked through the presentation then opened for questions. ST asked if consideration had been given to rural residents regarding the changing needs of the aging population. Appropriate housing would enable residents to stay in the community rather than move to another area of the county to obtain suitable accommodation. ST also asked if consideration has been given for individuals with learning disabilities who are transitioning from parental care to independent living. MA confirmed independent living for residents with learning disabilities is an issue as developers are looking to develop residential care homes but not adapted homes. Feedback is given by planners to developers to consider this as an option. Developers are required to have 10% of properties consist of bungalow type. Other conditions can be imposed on developers but there must be justification.

2024/25 County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation November 2023

Michael Laing (ML) discussed the presentation points and asked for any questions. ML asked that the presentation slides be shared for feedback to be returned before the consultation closing date of 3rd December 2023. ML also advised any feedback can be sent to Angelina to forward. RL asked about the potential change from 14 to 12 AAP's and if this made Weardale more at risk. ML stated it was important to find AAP boundaries that made sense and particularly for the dale as he is aware there is a lot of interest in the outcome. Concerns were raised that rural areas can be perceived as a quick win for budget reduction however, the reality is it creates wider and longer lasting repercussions which has a disproportionately adverse effect. AH stated he would send an email to AM

5. Weardale Action Partnership Update

County Durham Partnership Meeting feedback. 10-year celebration of Public Health

AM and RL attended this event which was a celebration of the move by Public Health to the local authority and the projects that had been developed and delivered over this time.

Board members have received a copy of the annual report in advance of the meeting. This can also be found at www.durham.gov.uk/article/22392/Annual-report

Frosterley Play Area

On the afternoon of Thursday 26th October, the WAP team met with children and parents in Frosterley Primary School. A second consultation session was then held at Frosterley Village Hall from 4:00pm – 6:00pm.

At the school, the children were very engaged in the process and happy to share their thoughts on play equipment needs. Attendance was good. Discussions with attendees at both consultations also raised issues of dog fouling in the area adjacent to the play park as well as in the play area itself. It was also raised that dogs are being taken into this area. AM advised this was an issue to be taken seriously due to the health-related issues of dog fouling and has already raised this issue with local wardens.

AM advised that the project will be dependent on the funding available at the time and that, once confirmed, she will share information on potential schemes. In terms of the current confirmed funding, we have £37K from Towns and Villages. This project will be processed last to ensure any projects that cannot meet the timelines can enhance the Frosterley play area project.

Round 2 – National Power Grid (NPG) Funding

AM advised that Round 2 of the NPG fund has awarded Stanhope Community Centre £20K for solar panels. AM advised the criteria for this fund has seemed to change and she hoped other groups who had applied and been unsuccessful would be able to re-apply or be reconsidered in future. AM has requested feedback from NPG to support the groups.

Small Grants Fund update- Frosterley Community Music Night Update

AM advised the funding has not been used as intended as the event did not go ahead due to a late cancellation by the band. The group have identified other fundraising activities to take place in lieu of this event with the funding provided. The Board confirmed they were happy to approve this change of use to funding.

6. Towns & Villages Funding Update

BL gave a presentation on the status of Towns & Villages funding in Weardale. BL confirmed the short funding timeline.

Completed Projects

1. Ashcroft MUGA Refurbishment - £32,000 (Total cost £42,000). Handover by project Manager 22/11/2023. Photos of the original damaged pitch and new type 1 Sport England certified MUGA were shared with the Board.

Projects with grant offer issued.

2. Killhope Interpretation - £27,000 (Total cost £32,000). This project is underway with completion expected by 31/03/2024

Board Approved Projects in Appraisal

3. Weardale Way Works - £44,000 (Total cost £63,610). This project is being discussed with the appraisal team. Due to there being several issues that will be addressed as the project proceeds, staged release of funding is proposed.
4. Frosterley Village Christmas Lighting Infrastructure - £10,668 (Total cost £17,258). This project requires further clarification and permission from Stanhope Parish Council. BL has asked for this to be discussed at the Parish Council meeting on 5th December 2023 to enable this project to move forward.
5. Muggleswick Church Camping Project - £50,000 (Total cost £220,000). BL identified the issues with this project moving forward due to the September Board offer being conditional on all statutory consents being approved and all funding being secured for early application from the Church to the Benefact Trust. It is not possible for the Benefact Trust funding to be applied for until planning permission is confirmed. BL had a discussion with planning staff today and there is still some toing and froing with information required. However, there are also the issues of gap funding from Benefact Trust and the Rural Funding not being confirmed. The current issue is that it will be 2-3 months for any grant offer from the Benefact Trust. BL advised the Board need now to make a decision on this project as it was struggling to meet the timeline.

Projects yet to be approved

6. Weardale Play Areas (Phase 2) - £46,332. Play area developments, if confirmed quickly, DCC Outdoors Facilities Team will be able to meet the timescale for preparing application for sign off within the T&V timeline.

Muggleswick Church Camping Project

RL stated that the information provided by BL was concerning bearing in mind the time this project has had invested by HB and the AAP team.

BL said it had been made clear to him that planning cannot make a decision before Christmas. It would be January 2024 before any decision could be made and there was still the issue of the gap funding to be addressed.

BL has spoken with the senior planning officer and confirmed the planning team are liaising with the architect for the project (Ninette).

HB advised the group were not aware no decision would be made before Christmas and that just today she had received an email from the planning officer requesting information but feels this is information that has been provided by Ninette. HB said reports as well as church accounts have been provided. HB has concerns about communication with this project and asked that the Board consider giving 2 weeks to see if things can move forward.

RL asked AM and Board members if they felt this 2 week review period could or should be considered. AM confirmed it was possible if that was the Board decision. AM did state that it was not the role of AAP officers to influence the process of the Planning Dept and their decision was final. AM stated that this project has been in development for nearly three years and the issues now being raised are issues the AAP team and T&V team highlighted at the beginning of the project.

AHo said he felt 2 weeks should be considered and would there be any possibility of rolling forward fund or utilising another budget next year.

AM said there was not an option to roll forward T&V budget as the funding is only to March 2024, and utilising the Area Budget could be an issue if the money is seen as necessary for church repairs as AAP funding cannot be used to support church refurbishment.

HB understands that funding cannot be used on church repairs but the solar panel element on the roof is able to be funded.

ML suggested a 2 week review, to give time to go back to planning to have one definitive response from the planning team to enable a decision to be made. ML reiterated that AAP funding cannot be used for religious purposes. AM confirmed it was important to have the definitive response to move forward.

RL asked that an appointment be made for in 2 weeks to decide on this project.

CF confirmed she agreed to a meeting again in 2 weeks to review the situation but asked about how the group could be helped to source funding if this project could not be progressed with AAP T&V. AM confirmed that she would help the group look at the funding options available.

HB said the issue was that DCC planning were the only department in the country to request permission for this type of project but would get in touch with the planning department tomorrow (1/12/2023) to confirm all information sent & received.

Later in the meeting JB asked that as planning permission was not required in other areas of the country, would it be possible for HB to progress with things without planning permission. AM advised that as T&V funding is from DCC it would not be progressed without this permission.

7. Area Budget Overview

2023/24 Area Budget - £100,000

Allocated Funding

Close Knit Community	£5,000
Weardale WordFest	£10,000
Weardale Together	£2,485
Citizens Songwriters	£17,932
St Thomas Church Hall	£18,500

Applications for Board Approval –

Weardale Income Maximisation Project Community Recovery and Resilience

AM advised that this project will provide support until 2025 ensuring that the project straddles into the period of change with the AAP's into Networks. This AAP funding is matched against the Welfare Reform funding to pay for the worker, ensuring local needs addressed. Application total £19,635.

The project was discussed; no additional comments or conditions were made.

Email circulation prior to meeting – £9,635 (AB) APPROVED by Board.

Witton-le-Wear Youth Club 2024-25

AM explained that the funding for this project provided resources and staffing to deliver youth activity in an area with few resources and confirmed that the feedback on the project was positive.

The project was discussed; no additional comments or conditions were made.
Email circulation prior to meeting – £13,000 (AB) APPROVED by Board.

Expressions of Interest

Wolsingham Wayfarers - £10,000

AM asked if there were any comments on the EOI and if the Board had reviewed the information provided. ST asked if there is a link between the Wolsingham Wayfarers and AONB linking to the T&V application. AM confirmed both groups were aware of each other and worked together, giving the example of one of the volunteers having a good relationship with local farmers and so able to share information to help each party understand any issues.

The project was discussed; no additional comments or conditions were made.

Email circulation prior to meeting – Board RECOMMENDED moving to full application.

8. Other WAP Funding Streams

Welfare Reform Budget

Discussed under Area Budget (Item 7). **Email circulation prior to meeting – £10,000 APPROVED by Board.**

Fun & Food

AM explained this funding was for activities with food, and the importance of trying to engage the families eligible for FSM (Free School Meals) and children with additional needs that this funding is aimed at supporting to help ensure funding will be available into the future. AM discussed that only two applications had come forward for Christmas but not through lack of the team trying to encourage take up of applications. The take up is down to groups wanting to take time off over Christmas which was understandable as some groups cover all other holiday periods. AM confirmed the Board were happy with the plans developed and applications made for the Fun and Food funding which the Board agreed. AM noted that other AAP's also had difficulty in utilising all of their Fun & Food funding over the Christmas period. AM also advised that TE is working with schools to encourage take up by those children who this fund is focussed on supporting but also will ensure that places are taken up by advertising more widely.

Fun & Food Christmas holiday activities will be held in Rookhope Village Hall, 23rd December and Stanhope St Thomas Church Hall, 27th December. Information posters and flyers will be sent to local Board members to share. AM advised should any Board member wish to visit a session they should get in touch to arrange this.

Angelina also advised that information had just been received for February Fun & Food funding and so if there were any groups they felt may be interested in this they should ask them to get in touch with the team.

9. Neighbourhood Budget

Cllr Savory

2023/24 Neighbourhood Budget (NB)

- Tables – Wolsingham St Thomas' Centre
- Frosterley Seating Area x 2 - Durham County Council

2023/24 Small Grant Fund

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

Remaining NB funding identified for Lydgate Lane 20mph application.

Coronation Fund

- Summer concert – Wolsingham Parish Council

Cllr Shuttleworth

2023/24 Neighbourhood Budget (NB)

- Frosterley Seating Area x 2 - Durham County Council

Small Grant Fund

- Running costs - Cowshill Domino Club.
- Running costs – Wearhead Bowls Club.

Coronation Fund

- Coronation Lunch Event – Rookhope Village Hall
- Coronation Lunch Event – Barrington Bites

10. Neighbourhood Issues

Hospital appointment times for rural residents

SL advised she had responded to the AAP team following a query on helping patients address the issues of appointment times linking to ability to travel. The suggestions AAP had made to SL she agreed were good points to help address this issue which included a note on patient record, discussing issues with the Community Wellness Coordinator and speaking to the appointment team. SL also suggested that speaking with the manager of the CDDFT central appointments team to raise this is a concern to allow them to consider this internally, but SL noted there is a lot of pressure on this team during the winter period. SL also understood this may not be a blanket approach for all older people.

ST explained he was the person who raised this issue with the AAP and this came about due to an upper dale resident needing to be in Bishop Auckland for an appointment at 8am; and a recent experience for a family member whereby an appointment was at 8.30am but due to their need for support with personal care and medication they needed to be up by 6am to get to a hospital only a mile away. ST felt it should be a health service consideration and common sense for people making appointments for older people.

ML said Richard Morris was the person to contact at CDDFT but agreed this needs to be a personal choice. Patient transport is an option to help get to appointments, but appointment timings are set by the consultant for their clinics, so it may be necessary to call and ask for a later timed appointment.

ST advised that patient transport is not an option as with other pick up's this would mean that the person would need to leave by 6.30 for an 8am appointment. ST noted that the appointment he was talking about was much more of a standard appointment but also any changes to an appointment may be weeks later.

Newtown House

AHu asked if anyone knew what was happening with the building as it is falling into disrepair. AM advised she would get an update on the situation from the Assets team.

11. Countywide Partner Issues

No issues raised

12. Dates and Times of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Weardale Action Partnership Board will take place on Thursday **18th January at 6:00pm – Eastgate Village Hall** (weather permitting).

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.