

Notes of the Weardale Area Action Partnership Board Meeting – 18th January 2024



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**
Kevin Roddam (KR)
Adrian Holden (AH)
Stephen Thomas (ST)
Will Wearmouth (WW)
Caroline Ford (CF)

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
Michael Laing (ML) - Durham County Council

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

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

APOLOGIES

Public Representatives: Alison Humble

Elected Representatives: Cllr John Shuttleworth

Partner Representatives: Dan Wootton – Fire & Rescue Service
Michael Kelleher - Durham County Council

Officers: Bill Lightburn

BOARD MEETING

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Introductions were made and apologies recorded as above. The Chair apologised for the short notice move to Teams but explained that it was necessary due to current weather conditions.

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
- DS – Wolsingham Wayfarers

3. Agreement of Notes from Board Meeting held on 30th November 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. Weardale Action Partnership Update

WAP Office Accommodation (AM)

- The accommodation budget for AAP's has been removed resulting in AAP's being displaced into DCC buildings.
- Discussions continue to find a base in Weardale for the WAP team.
- WAP team will leave current office at the end of March 2024.
- ML asked AM to speak to him outside of the meeting to look at the potentiality of using Weardale Community Hospital as a base.
- AS stated that the WAP team needs to be in Weardale as any office base outside of the area would make the team less accessible. She suggested that Board members should be doing all they can to stop the WAP team from leaving Weardale.

Welcome Spaces

- This scheme was previously known as 'Warm Spaces'.
- AM encouraged Board members to forward any interested organisations to her for more information.

Energy Efficiency Grant

Business Energy Efficiency Project (BEEP) Reports

- AM explained that a DCC engineer can visit community buildings to carry out a BEEP report which is a means by which financial savings can be identified through energy reductions.

- So far, £60,000 worth of funding to address specific needs has come into Weardale because of these reports.
- AM encouraged any Board members who know of any organisation who may benefit from having a BEEP report to contact her for further information.
- AM advised that any building with a current BEEP report could benefit from two funding streams which are currently available and encouraged anyone interested in this to contact her.

Weardale Activity Programme

AM reminded Board members that Covid Recovery funding granted a couple of years ago had been allocated to the funding of two Sports Apprentices. She explained that although a recruitment drive had been initiated three times no-one suitable had been found to take on the roles.

A Wellness Movement Programme has been developed with the aim of meeting the same objective via a different methodology of delivery. The programme consists of six elements:

1. Personal Trainer

- DCC are working with a Personal Trainer who specialises in rehabilitation.
- Aim to work with older members of the community providing gentle movement exercises delivered in group sessions in Weardale.
- Plan to meet members of Barrington Bites lunch club next week to start to work with them. Session objectives: to increase stability with the aim of reducing trips and falls.
- Will also be working with new mums via the Toddler Group in Stanhope.

2. ManHealth

- Evidence of a high percentage of suicides within the farming community in the Weardale and Teesdale area.
- ManHealth is an insured and qualified organisation whose service is more in-depth than peer support allowing appropriate referrals to be made.
- AM confirmed that sustainability has been looked at and an idea is to merge with the well-established model of 'Men's sheds'.
- She advised that future plans include developing community champions.

3. Durham Dales Hockey

- AM advised that the group has a new management committee. The group is not yet fully sustainable and funding is being used towards pitch/hall hire.

4. Health & Safety Risk Assessments

- After Covid, a lot of volunteers (and their knowledge) has been lost from community organisations and buildings.
- This funding will provide someone to conduct assessments and help with the paperwork process ensuring that all paperwork is up-to-date in order to help achieve long-term sustainability.

5. Training and Development

- Training for young people who will gain qualifications and will give back by running training sessions.

6. Forward Development

- This will be tailored to Weardale.

5. Towns & Villages Funding Update

AM gave a short overview of the status of Towns & Villages funding in Weardale.

Completed Projects

Ashcroft MUGA Refurbishment - £32,000 (Total £42,000)

Grant Offers Issued

Killhope Interpretation - £27,000 (Total £32,000)

Frosterley Village Christmas Lighting Infrastructure - £10,668 (Total £17,258)

Weardale Way Works - £44,000 (Total £63,610)

Projects In Appraisal

Muggleswick Church Camping Project - £50,000 (Total £220,000)

Projects In Development

Weardale Play Areas (Phase 2) - £46,332 (Fund balance)

Project Updates

Muggleswick Church Camping Project (Muggleswick with Edmundbyers PCC)

- Planning permission was granted this morning.
- Project proposal has been through a soft appraisal so potential issues have already been resolved.

Weardale Play Areas (Phase 2)

- Towns & Villages funding has to be allocated by end of financial year.
- Looking for a legacy project
- Consultation has been carried out with local children.
- Substantial sized play area.
- Residents have concerns of dogs in play areas.
 - Clean & Green site inspection found no dog faeces present
- Resurfacing costs about £20,000 - Health & Safety requirement. Couple of pieces of equipment and all resurfacing would cost approximately £70,000.
- If funding can be increased to £90,000 it would enable the purchase of a lot more individual items.
- For another £20-£30,000 could get significantly more equipment.

AM advised that it is highly likely there will be a General Election towards the end of the year which will mean at least six weeks in purdah. AM suggested that as this is the last year of a 4-year AAP funding cycle it may be prudent to consider one big capital project.

Comments:

HB – how long does play equipment last? AM dependant on type of equipment and maintenance but at least 15 years.

AS - Frosterley has needed an upgrade for a long time – makes sense to go bigger and get a fuller project.

AHol – Good number of children in Frosterley – well used play area. Makes Frosterley more attractive for families.

AM reminded Board members that a funding decision is not yet required. She suggested asking the Outdoor Facilities team to provide further information to show what is possible and to give more details regarding lifespan and maintenance.

6. Area Budget Overview

2023/24 Area Budget - £100,000

AB Overview

£100,000 is fully allocated. Next AAP Board will detail full allocation.

Application for Board Approval – Wolsingham Wayfarers

Cllr AS declared an interest

- Wolsingham Wayfarers are a volunteer led organisation who carry out an immense amount of work.
- This project includes identifying and developing a walking route for Stanhope and the creation of a leaflet. Currently no linkage from Stanhope train station.
- Funding will also include a reprint of the existing Wolsingham leaflets.
- In addition, repairs/enhancements will be carried out on some pathways within the Wolsingham Parish boundary.

Comments:

- AS stated that the Wolsingham Wayfarers are a diligent and successful group whose efforts provide better facilities for locals and visitors alike.
- ST stated that he really likes the proposal. He was pleased to see that it is designed to provide an accessible route. He asked how accessibility is being ensured and queried if people with disabilities would be consulted. AM confirmed that the committee have a good understanding of the requirements as some members have family members with restricted mobility and use a wheelchair. ST felt that the project will enhance the attraction of Stanhope as a place to visit.
- **Email circulation prior to meeting – Board APPROVED the application with no further comments or queries raised.**

7. Other WAP Funding Streams

Welfare Reform Budget

No further update

Fun & Food

- AM explained that the £1,430 allocated to Fun & Food activities in February includes an uplift for rural areas.
- AM reminded Board members that applications must be for at least £500 and must target Free School Meal eligibility criteria.
- AM explained to Board members the difficulty this poses as we are not able to ask whether people are eligible for Free School Meals.
- Understandably, the Department of Education who provides the funding, is very strict that those benefitting from the provision must be eligible for Free School Meals.
- AM advised that take up from eligible beneficiaries has been low across County Durham and the approach to delivery is being rethought.
- AM explained that in Weardale, TE has used her established relationships with the schools to ensure all information is first provided to those in receipt of Free School Meals so that they have priority. Unfortunately this is no guarantee that these children will attend the sessions.

February Half Term Fun & Food Applications

3 applications have been received for funding for February (circulated by email prior to the meeting for information). The applications have been evaluated by the WAP team alongside Fun & Food colleagues.

- **Rookhope Village Hall** – no amendment necessary.
- **Witton-le-Wear Youth Club** – Fun & Food colleagues applied criteria and removed trampolining visit to ensure as many children as possible benefit from the funding.
- **Weardale Together** – Fun & Food colleagues found the staff/children ratio excessive.

Rookhope Village Hall and Witton-le-Wear Youth Club have been successful in their applications - unfortunately Weardale Together has not. All organisations have been informed of the decision.

Comments:

- JB – £300 per day for a lead craft artist seems excessive. AM advised that the figures used are acceptable Arts Council rates.
- AS - Happy to accept guidance offered by Fun & Food colleagues. Activities are essential in Rookhope and Witton-le-Wear which are rural communities with limited bus services.
- ST – Happy with the proposal. Some ideas were innovative and encouraged the WAP team to keep in touch with Weardale Together for the future.
 - AM advised that WAP are already funding their youth provision and will keep the Board updated with their work.
- DP – It is an interesting project but agreed with the staffing ratio concerns.
 - Advised believe housing still has some £500 funding available. AM advised she will make the group aware.

Fun and Food funding is now fully allocated.

8. Neighbourhood Budget

Cllr Savory

2023/24 Neighbourhood Budget

- Tables – Wolsingham St Thomas' Centre
- Frosterley Seating Area x 2 - Durham County Council
- (In process) Lydgate Lane 20mph – linked to Area Budget

2023/24 Small Grant Fund

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

Coronation Fund

- Summer concert – Wolsingham Parish Council

Cllr Shuttleworth

2023/24 Neighbourhood Budget

- Frosterley Seating Area x 2 - Durham County Council

Small Grant Fund

- Cowshill Dominoes – Cowshill Village Hall

- Wearhead Bowls Club – Wearhead Bowls Club

Coronation Fund

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

9. Neighbourhood Issues

Newtown House Development

CF asked for an update. AM advised that discussions are taking place between the developer and Durham County Council with regard to an existing covenant.

Weardale Railway Fencing

CF advised that some fencing between the railway and Bondisle sports field had fallen and was an eyesore. AS offered to follow up and report back.

Eastgate Christmas Children's Party

WW thanked the Board for the £500 granted via the Small Grants Fund towards the children's party at Christmas. He advised that 65 children had attended and that they had taken part in arts and crafts and had a visit from a children's entertainer. He explained that children from the whole dale had been involved and there had been a lot of positive feedback.

10. Countywide Partner Issues

Suicide rates in rural areas

- SL advised Board members of a charity "We Are Farming Minds" based in Herefordshire but which has advice phonelines.
- County Durham experiences higher than average suicide rates.
- Could be of interest to see what the rural breakdown looks like.
- Insp. ET suggested contacting UTASS as intervention work may already be taking place.

Crime In County Durham

- Insp. ET advised of a recent rise in crime across County Durham – especially car theft.
- He recommended any car owner with a keyless entry system (especially new Range Rovers) to get a Faraday bag to store keys in.
- He also recommended the use of a steering lock.

Rural Watch

- Insp. Et advised that yesterday saw the launch of Rurali – a scheme which utilises modern day methods specifically tailored to support rural areas.
- £200,000 of funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner's 'Safer Streets' fund was secured for Rurali and will provide:
 - Dedicated Rural Watch coordinators
 - Dedicated intelligence officer
- A recent Rural Watch success in Weardale saw an arrest being made and property being returned following the theft of three quad bikes in Weardale.

TEWV Urgent & Crisis Care Service Consultation

- ST advised that engagement is taking place and suggested that it is important that the voice of rural communities is not ignored.

- He asked if TEWV had engaged in Weardale. SL offered to follow up on this and look at the possibility of rural engagement.

Miscellaneous

Cllr Savory took the opportunity to make some comments:

- She thanked the WAP team for the decision to use Teams - keeping Board members safe.
- She reflected that as citizens our duty is to be the eyes and ears to help the police solve crimes. This is especially true in large rural areas like Weardale.
- She advised that 'Stars in Their Eyes' will take place on 1st March in Wolsingham Sports Hall. All proceeds go to Weardale Community Hospital and the MS Society. For further information contact AS directly.

11. Dates and Times of Future Meetings

Board members agreed the proposed dates for Board meetings in 2024/25 that was detailed on the agenda.

The next meeting of the Weardale Action Partnership Board will take place on Thursday **29th February at 6:00pm – Eastgate Village Hall** (weather permitting).

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.