

Notes of the Weardale Area Action Partnership AGM & Board Meeting – 9th May 2024



Frosterley Village Hall

ATTENDEES

Board Members

Public Representatives: Richard Lawrie (RL) – **CHAIR**
Kevin Roddam (KR)
Will Wearmouth (WW)

Partner Representatives: Damian Pearson (DP) – Believe Housing
Kieran Hughes (KH) – Fire & Rescue Service
Insp. Michael Sammut (MS) – Durham Constabulary
Julian Haynes (JH) – Voluntary Sector
Jeff Bell (JB) – 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 (Stanhope Parish Council)

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

APOLOGIES

Public Representatives: Alison Humble
Caroline Ford
Stephen Thomas
Adrian Holden

Elected Representatives: Cllr John Shuttleworth
Billy McAloon – Fire & Rescue Service

Partner Representatives: Michael Kelleher - Durham County Council

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

He welcomed Insp. Mike Sammut who joins the Board following Insp. Ed Turner's recent retirement.

Dan Wootton (Fire Service) has moved to another role. Billy McAloon is the new Fire Service representative - although he has sent apologies for tonight's meeting.

Introductions were made and apologies recorded as above.

2. 2023/24 Area Budget Update

AM gave an overview of the Area Budget allocation for 2023/24

Budgets available consisted of:

- £100,000 Area Budget
- £10,000 Welfare Reform
- £9,902 Youth Fund

Area Budget - £100,000

- Weardale Together CIC – Youth Sessions - **£2,485 (+ £9,902 Youth Fund)**
- NorthPens – Weardale WordFest - **£10,000**
- Citizens Advice County Durham – Weardale Income Maximisation Project - **£9,635**
- **(+ £10,000 Welfare Reform)**
- Close Knit Community – Close Knit Community - **£5,000**
- Citizen Songwriters – The Story Train - **£17,932**
- St Thomas' Church Hall – Update to Resources - **£18,500**
- Durham County Council – Lydgate Lane Signage - **£11,495 (+ £16,055 – Cllr Savory's NB)**
- Witton-le-Wear Youth Club – Youth Club April 2024 – July 2025 - **£13,000**
- Wolsingham Wayfarers – Wolsingham Wayfarers - **£10,000**

Welfare Reform - £10,000

Citizens Advice County Durham – Weardale Income Maximisation Project - **£10,000**
(+ £9,635 Area Budget)

Youth Fund - £9,902

Weardale Together CIC – Youth Sessions - **£9,902 (+ £2,485 Area Budget)**

2023/24 Total allocation:

Area Budget	£98,047
Welfare Reform	£10,000
Youth Fund	<u>£ 9,902</u>
Total	£117,949

Underspend of £1,953 will be rolled over to the 2024/25 budget.

Witton-le-Wear Youth Club - AM advised that discussions have taken place with representatives of Witton-le-Wear Community Centre and Witton-le-Wear Parish Council to discuss the future sustainability of the Youth Club. **Action: AM to provide OW with more detailed figures.**

Wolsingham Wayfarers – Cllr AS attended the Wolsingham Wayfarers AGM and reported that the group was full of praise for the Weardale Action Partnership. She stated that the Wayfarers are a highly esteemed group who carry out a large amount of work within the Wolsingham Parish Council area. An informative presentation was given at the AGM and she suggested that they be invited to a future Board meeting. **Decision: The Board felt that this would be interesting and will be invited to a meeting at a later date – Action: WAP Team.**

Weardale Income Maximisation Project - AM suggested that the Rural Advice Worker be invited to a future Board meeting to provide an update on the project. **Decision: The Board felt that this would be useful and an invitation will be sent – Action: WAP Team.**

Weardale Together CIC Youth Sessions – AM advised that the funding provided weekly youth sessions and allowed one of the leaders to achieve a Level 3 qualification in Youth Work.

3. Neighbourhood Budget

AM gave an overview of the Neighbourhood Budget allocation for 2023/24.

Cllr Savory

Neighbourhood Budget

- Tables – Wolsingham St Thomas Centre
- Frosterley Seating Area x 2 – Durham County Council
- Lydgate Lane Signage - Durham County Council (Linked to Area Budget)

Small Grant Fund

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

Coronation Fund

- Summer Concert – Wolsingham Parish Council

Cllr Shuttleworth

Neighbourhood Budget

- Frosterley Seating Area x 2 – Durham County Council
- Edmundbyers Village Hall Windows – Edmundbyers Village Hall

Small Grant Fund

- Running Costs – Cowshill Dominos Club
- Running Costs – Wearhead Bowls Club

Coronation Fund

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

Edmundbyers Village Hall Windows – **Application circulated by email to the Board with no declaration of interest, ratified by the Board.**

AM explained how helping Edmundbyers Village Hall access a BEEP report has enabled the hall to apply to other pots of funding to maximise the NB funding.

AM advised that any underspend will be rolled forward into 2024/25 with spend encouraged as soon as possible as restrictions will be imposed in the weeks prior to a General Election.

4. Annual Report

The Chair encouraged Board members to take some time to read the report at their leisure. He noted that it highlights the good work carried out by the Board and Team over the last year. He thanked everyone for their work over the last year and emphasised the good work that comes out of these meetings.

He thanked Cllr AS and DP in their role as Vice Chairs. He acknowledged the changes taking place due to both the AAP Review and the office move. He thanked Cllr AS for her hard work and dedication in championing the cause of the WAP and the Team. He expressed his thanks to the Team for their work and support during his tenure as Chair and told Board members that he had enjoyed the role.

Killhope Interpretation – JB queried the omission of WAP funding in a Durham County News article about Killhope. **AM advised that she will investigate and report back – Action AM.** She noted that WAP AB funding was instrumental in Killhope being able to attract such large pots of money from elsewhere.

Decision: The Board APPROVED and ACCEPTED the Annual Report.

5. Election of Chair and Vice Chairs

Board Members **AGREED** to Cllr Anita Savory becoming Chair of the Weardale Action Partnership in 2024-25.

Cllr AS took the Chair. She stated that it is a privilege to serve again as Chair and asked for a vote of thanks for Richard for his work as Chair acknowledging his time, skills and dedication to the Weardale Action Partnership. She said that she thinks of the Weardale Action Partnership as the 'Rolls Royce' of AAPs and encouraged Board members to keep delivering worthwhile projects.

BOARD MEETING

1. Declaration of Interest

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

WW declared an interest in Item 6 – NB Application for Stanhope Agricultural Society bandstand due to being a member of the Stanhope Show Committee.

2. Agreement of Notes from Board Meeting held on 29th February 2024 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.

3. Weardale Action Partnership Update

Office Move

The Chair advised that the Team have been looking for a suitable office base in Weardale but so far none meets all the needs. The major issue is the viability of meeting members of the public in these locations. The Chair advised that she continues to strongly advocate for a dedicated base within Weardale as she believes it is vital that the Team retain their presence in the area.

Board members discussed the situation and a number of locations were put forward and their limitations discussed:

- Any DCC School – safeguarding issues when dealing with the public.
- Weardale Community Hospital – already being utilised but not able to meet with the public there.
- Weardale Community Partnership Office – again already being utilised but confidentiality is a potential issue as well as space due to the Weardale Community Transport Team having been temporarily relocated to the office.
- Durham Dales Centre (smaller office) – managed external to DCC so does not meet budget cut criteria.
- Stanhope Fire Station – would have to be Free of Charge. As an operational Fire Station it is not appropriate for meeting members of the public.
- Meeting in residents homes – there has been a suggestion that the Team meet members of the public in their own homes. AM advised that this is not appropriate and is not under consideration.

AM advised that options are still being investigated and a variety of solutions have been put forward for consideration. The Chair shared her concerns regarding the Weardale Action Partnership moving out of the area. AM advised that any accommodation proposal would need to be suitable for all parties.

AAP Realignment

AM referred to an email sent to Board members on behalf of Gordon Elliott, Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement has accepted early retirement. In another cost saving measure, his department has now been aligned to other departments within the council. The AAPs will now sit under Economic Development.

Local Resilience Forum Webinar

AM asked Board members to encourage people to sign up for the webinar. A poster will be uploaded to the AAP Facebook page to enable members to share it.

4. 2024/25 Area Budget Overview

Board members were reminded of the projects funded through the Towns and Villages Fund.

Ashcroft MUGA	- £32,000
Killhope Interpretation	- £27,000
Weardale Way Works	- £44,000
Frosterley Village Christmas Lighting Infrastructure	- £10,688
Muggleswick Church Camping	- £50,000

Board members expressed an interest in a visit to Muggleswick Church to see the project in development. **Action WAP team to coordinate at an appropriate time in the project.**

AM also reminded them that £46,332 has been allocated to the refurbishment of Frosterley Play Area and that discussions have taken place previously regarding the allocation of additional funding from this year's Area Budget to make a significant impact on the play area. This will be discussed further later in the meeting.

2024/25 Available Budgets

Area Budget	£90,000	(£60,000 – Revenue; £30,000 – Capital)
Youth Fund	£10,000	
Big Arts Project (Revenue)	£10,000	
Welfare Reform	<u>£10,000</u>	
Total	£120,000	

Area Budget Potential Projects

Frosterley Play Area

As discussed above, Board members have previously been minded to ringfence a portion of the Area Budget to significantly enhance the Towns and Villages funding.

Decision: The Board APPROVED that £50,000 of Area Budget be ringfenced for Frosterley Play Area.

Action: WAP Team to invite the project lead to the next Board meeting to give Board members an overview of what can be achieved with this level of funding.

- Weardale Railway - **Cllr AS declared an interest.**

The initial project proposed seems to have expanded significantly.

Action: WAP Team to request a clear understanding of the proposal.

- Wolsingham Parish Council – Toilets - **Cllr AS and DS declared an interest**
AM queried whether work has already started on the project. DS clarified that work has started on trenching and foundations. AM explained that commitment to spend can only be made within a financial year and no funding can be granted retrospectively.

- Weardale Adventure Centre
A pilot project tackling open-water swimming safety. Funding required amounts to £1,500. AM advised that there is an underspend in one of the Covid Recovery projects and asked the Board if they would be minded to allocate the underspend to this project instead of utilising Area Budget.
Decision: The Board APPROVED the exploration of using alternative funds as proposed.
- Westgate Village Hall – Kitchen Upgrade
WW advised that the new committee is having a big impact on the hall and it is a vibrant venue.
- Stanhope Scouts
An initial request for equipment and room hire to help ensure sustainability.
- Frosterley Village Hall
New windows, lift, insulation. AM advised that she has recommended a BEEP report be carried out to help open up additional sources of funding. She advised that a relatively small Area Budget contribution could help them attract more significant amounts of match funding.
- Stanhope Community Centre
A request for new windows - £30,000. AM advised that the centre has already had a BEEP report and had successfully applied for £20,000 of funding from Northern PowerGrid which they have chosen to spend on solar panels.
- Trades4Care
An organisation who provides painting and decorating at cost price for community buildings. Suggestion of a project to look at offering a service to all community buildings in the WAP area.
- Community Wellness Coordinator
An extension of the current project.
- UTASS
Supporting the rural community via training into employment or sustaining employment.
- Community Café – Upper Dale
The provision of a community café in Ireshopeburn for Upper Dale residents.

AM advised that the projects detailed above are from those who have approached the WAP team. She asked the Board if they would also like to initiate a 'call out' for projects to ensure as many people as possible are aware of the funding.

Decision: The Board AGREED that the WAP Team initiate a 'call out' for projects to apply for Area Budget funding.

Action: WAP Team to issue a call out and invite applications in time for presentation at the next Board meeting on 6th June.

5. Update on Other WAP funding streams:

2023/24 Area Budget - £100,000

Welfare Reform - £10,000

AAPs cease to exist from March 2025 and will be replaced by Local Networks. AM advised the Board that the Citizens Advice worker is funded until June 2025. AM advised that she needs to investigate whether there is any updated guidelines with regard to any restrictions on allowing future projects to rollover beyond the lifespan of AAPs. The Chair suggested that it would be wise to keep her as long as possible as she has made big inroads with families and has built up trust with them allowing her to work with people to get rid of large amounts of debt.

Youth Fund - £10,000

AM advised that previously Witton-le-Wear Youth Club and Weardale Together have benefitted from this funding stream. She shared that there are other potential groups who could apply for this funding including the Youth Group at Westgate and the Community Boxing Club in Stanhope. She advised that potentially this funding pot can be split between several groups.

Big Arts Fund - £10,000

Funding to address mental health and wellbeing, look at preventing suicide and address social isolation. It is very similar to a previous project run by Jill Essam of Harehope Quarry, so an initial discussion has taken place with her. She is suggesting a project proposal that would require £5,000 of funding but is also open to using the Harehope Quarry site as a venue for other organisations delivering activities within this funding stream.

Fun & Food - £9,725

This year's funding allocation of £9,725 consists of:

- DFE allocation - £4,830 to cover Easter, Summer and Christmas 2024
- UK Prosperity Fund Funding - £4,895 to support non-DFE places. (Note: for every 2 DFE places and application can be made for 1 additional place for a vulnerable child. Vulnerabilities include SEND, Social Worker involvement and rural isolation.)

AM advised that organisations are finding it increasingly difficult to apply for this funding given that so much is unknown. As no one can know the FSM numbers, the applications become a matter of guesswork. Additionally, stringent monitoring requirements mean that some children who are eligible are not being counted into the figures which causes issues for the provider. A new set of criteria has recently been implemented and it is hoped that the teething issues will have resolved for delivery in the summer.

AM also advised that there is uncertainty as to how the two funding streams link together and this continues to be explored. She also advised that there is unease amongst some providers who feel that this new methodology singles out children with eligibility for Free School Meals.

AM advised that funding from the Weardale Action Partnership is being used to provide inflatable sessions at Wolsingham Swimming Pool. Priority is given to residents of Weardale on booking.

TE advised that applications are now open for the Fun & Food Summer programme – applications close on Wednesday 22nd May at 12noon.

6. Neighbourhood Budget 2024/25

Cllr Savory - Neighbourhood Budget

- Lydgate Lane Educational Aspect (in development)
(DP advised that believe housing are looking at ways to support this with their own funding streams.)

Cllr Shuttleworth - Neighbourhood Budget

- Stanhope Agricultural Society – Bandstand Renewal (Board approval required due to Declaration of Interest).

Applications circulated by email to Board members prior to the meeting. Decision: Board members APPROVED the application with no additional comments made.

AM advised that any Neighbourhood Budget which is unspent and not earmarked for a project by 31 December 2024 will be lost.

7. Neighbourhood Issues

AM advised that she was aware of some roadworks taking place in Wolsingham and advised that she would forward any information received to Board members.

8. Countywide Partner Issues

Police

Insp MS advised that he had met with Insp. Ed Turner prior to his retirement and had been asked to convey his good wishes to Board members and to say that he had enjoyed his time in Weardale. The Chair asked that a recognition of his time serving as a member of the WAP Board be placed on record with thanks.

Election of Vice Chairs

The Partner and Public sector proposed the following Board members to serve as Vice Chairs: Damian Pearson (Partner) and Richard Lawrie (Public). Both members accepted the position.

9. Dates and Times of Future Meetings

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

The Chair asked Board members to consider taking their copy of the Annual Report to any community meetings they attend to show the achievements of the Weardale Action Partnership. She acknowledged that a lot of time and effort goes into producing the report which highlights the volume of work that is carried out year on year. She thanked Angelina, Tracy and Fiona for their hard work and dedication and continuing to work on as usual despite the everyone for attending and closed the meeting.