

East Durham Area Action Partnership Board Meeting
6pm on Wednesday 23rd October 2024 at The Greenhills Centre, Wheatley Hill

PRESENT:

Public Representatives

Rona Hardy (Chair) (RH)
David Blackwell (DB)
Alison Paterson (AP)

Elected Members

Cllr Jake Miller (Cllr JM)
Cllr Terry Duffy (TD)
Cllr June Clark (JC) (standing in for Cllr Kevin Shaw)
Par Cllr Omide Deinali (OD)

Partner Representatives

Insp Phil Carter (PC)
A/Sgt Graham Hughes (GH)
Jim Murray (JM)

Co-opted Members

Edna Connor (EC)
Amanda Moon (AM)

Officer Attendance:

Ian Moran (IM) – AAP Coordinator
Laura Towers (LT) – AAP Support Officer
Kaye Stephenson (KS) – Community Development/Project Officer

Presenters:

Rob Davisworth (RD) - Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services, Durham County Council

Public Attendance:

Two members of the public were in attendance.

Apologies:

Cllr Angela Surtees, Cllr Kevin Shaw, Cllr Julie Griffiths, Graham Easterlow, Insp Joanne Eales, Ian Hankin, Ian Porter, Danny Dickinson, Andy Cammiss, Annabelle Lumsden

1. Introductions and Apologies

RH welcomed everyone to the meeting and a round of introductions was undertaken.

Apologies were noted, as above.

2. Previous Minutes & Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous Board Meeting on 11th September 2024 were approved by the Board as an accurate record of the meeting.

No matters arising.

3. Police Report

A/Sgt Graham Hughes – Seaham and Easington

There has been a great response to the suicide prevention training. GH offered thanks for the funding.

It was Retail Crime Week last week. The Neighbourhood Police Team had the chance to visit stores. Some prolific offenders were targeted and caught who were responsible several offences.

Two people were arrested at the Southside Club at Easington Village.

Another person who had been released was arrested for a theft from an elderly person.

A six-year sentence was received in relation to a machete attack in Murton.

Another person was arrested for intent to supply heroin.

Following car fires in Ryton Crescent, two youths have gone to the Youth Offending Service. Please report any intelligence in advance of Bonfire Night.

Letter drops are to take place in relation to illegal moneylending.

Insp Phil Carter

Ellisons Road Compound is now fully clear and there have been no reports from the compound in over four weeks.

Two more off road bikes have been seized. Calls have decreased in relation to this.

Thanks for funding which was received from Cllr John Higgins for a handheld speed camera in Wingate. The team is also looking to do a primary school initiative on posters in relation to this.

A male was arrested and remanded for over 8 shoplifting incidents and a knife incident in Horden.

A female was arrested and should be remanded for shoplifting and harassment.

A male was remanded for 10 months for a series of shopliftings.

14 untaxed vehicles and 3 ghost plates were found on a DVLA day of action.

New Section 59 Notices are in place in Shotton, Wingate, Peterlee, Horden, Blackhall and Trimdon.

The team is working with partners on a potential Closure Order on a property in Horden which causing a lot of ASB.

Two people have been remanded for aggravated burglary in Horden.

There will be a joint protocol with the Fire Service in relation to fireworks night. Please report any intelligence.

Four people were arrested at the Labour Club in Horden.

Some projects will take place with schools around County Lines.

RH noted that there would be no fire report at this meeting as apologies had been submitted.

4. Presentation

2025/26 County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation – Rob Davisworth, Durham County Council

RD presented an overview of the 2025/26 County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation.

Key messages of the consultation:

The new Government is facing a number of economic and departmental challenges and has not committed to providing additional funding to local government, nor to reform how the sector receives its allocations of funding. Indeed, we may see a real terms reduction in government funding.

The Council and the local government sector are lobbying the new Government to clearly set out the escalating and continuing challenges it faces.

A range of unavoidable and escalating budget pressures need to be accommodated next year, particularly in relation to social care.

The council is in a stronger position than many other local authorities, but we are using our reserves at quite a rapid rate.

There is a £21.7m shortfall in funding for 2025/26, which is based on an assumed 2.99% council tax rise and savings already approved of £3.229 million.

The council either needs to identify additional savings or consider using reserves again to balance the budget.

Since 2010, the council has had to make savings of £270m. The emphasis has always been to protect front line services through finding savings to back office and the workforce has reduced by 3,000 in this time. It is becoming much more difficult to make savings in this way.

The council continues to suffer from low tax base and limitations on local tax raising and income-generating capacity.

Work is underway to identify further budget savings to meet the shortfall expected for the MTFP between 2025/26 and 2028/29. Board feedback from the Budget Consultation will be taken to the Cabinet Meeting on 4 December 2024 where proposed savings plans referred to above will be considered.

A further consultation period will take place across the December to January period, for additional savings.

The Chair thanked RD for the presentation and welcomed any questions from the Board.

EC asked whether the single person's council tax discount will remain.

RD advised that the discount is currently 25%. This is set by Government, but it may be looked at.

Cllr JM thanked the Finance Team and noted that it is important to keep the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. It is unfortunate to cut things back, but some things may need to be looked at eg capital programme. In terms of back-office savings, this should start with top management and work down from there. AP agreed. DCC is a responsible council, but there is waste. Neighbourhoods includes community safety and it would be good to look at youth provision. Cllr JM also noted that with the adult social care precept, the council tax rise last year was 4.99% previously. RD advised that it is not currently sure whether this will continue.

RD noted that the LCT Reduction Scheme is a generous scheme. This may need to be looked at in the future. The capital programme is affordable, but we need to be careful about what we deliver. Some are cyclical processes. Reserves aren't able to go below a certain level or the government will step on to take the difficult decisions on budgets. Around 3,000 staff have been let go over the years. There is a reasonably slim structure at management level, but services need to be well led and customer focused. Some cuts have had to be reversed eg youth provision.

JM added that some elements have been lost due to the end of funding eg European Social Fund. Academisation has had a big effect economically. Alternative provision costs a lot, but better facilities are needed. It is about trying to prioritise things which will make the longer-term difference.

AP asked whether further consultation will be done with communities. It is important to get out to into the community on this. There are a lot of community partners who could help with this.

RD noted that more can be done to make it more interactive and by trying to reach out via social media. Consultation is also being done with the Youth Council, local councils and trade unions. Equality impact assessments need to be carried out needs to be considered too eg including people who may be digitally included.

JC asked where the money comes when people receive council tax benefit.

A notional sum is received for people are in receipt of council tax benefit. This is not adjusted every year.

RD advised that the government gave local authorities more discretion on how the council tax scheme is funded. This could be reduced.

PC noted that something to look further into could be chasing council tax arrears when notified.

RD advised that this could be escalated if council tax increases.

5. Priority Group Updates

The minutes of the last MSFOOC meeting on 3rd October were circulated to the Board with the meeting papers and taken as read.

ED Project 50 Proposed Extension

EC highlighted a declaration of interest due to a family member working at the college and did not vote.

Extension Request: £3,600

AM outlined that East Durham College would like to extend the current project by 36 weeks and offer more community classes in and around East Durham which would include targeting six centre with 12 continuous weeks each. The MSFOOC Priority Group recommended at the last meeting on 3rd October that the extension request should go to the Board.

As the meeting was one short of the quorum for partner representatives, IM drew the Chair's attention to the AAP Terms of Reference, Item 10, b. (iv.):

'Quorum - No business can be formally agreed at a Board meeting of the AAP unless a quorum of at least three members from each membership category are present i.e. a minimum of nine Board members. If a quorum is not achieved at the meeting then AAP co-ordinators will seek consensus for any decisions taken in principle at the meeting from absent board members either by email or by calling a special meeting in order that the work of the board can progress.'

ACTION: Board Members present approved the extension request. Partner representatives not present to be contacted for their response as per the item above.

Children, Young People & Families (CYPF) – Rona Hardy

As above, Item 10, b. (iv.) applied.

The final draft of the East Durham Youth Strategy was circulated to the Board with the meeting papers. No queries were raised by the Board Members present.

The request for consideration to the Board was to ring fence the remaining £51,725 revenue within the Children, Young People, and Families Priority Group to address recommendations within the youth strategy, this to be discussed at a CYPF meeting in November and be presented to the December Board.

ACTION: Board Members present agreed. Partner representatives not present to be contacted as per item 10, b. (iv.) above.

Neighbourhoods & Place (N&P) – Ian Moran

The minutes of the previous N&P meeting on 10th September were circulated to the Board and taken as read.

IM updated that a Connecting the Coast subgroup meeting had also taken place on 18th September looking at putting out the routeways around the coast.

Capital Grants

As above, Item 10, b. (iv.) applied.

Danny Dickinson, Amanda Moon and Kay Woodhall from the Neighbourhoods & Place Priority Group formed the panel who met to assess the bids. A scoring process was used to come to a consensus score based on the strengths and weaknesses of each application. Seven applications of £5k each were received for the £30k capital funding allocation.

The Panel request the Board note the report and:

- a. Approve a further £5k to the capital grants pot**

b. Endorse the following applications to be submitted for Area Budget:

- *Hornden Centennial Centre*
- *Hawthorn Parish Council*
- *South Hetton Parish Council*
- *Thornley Parish Council*
- *Murton Welfare Association*
- *East Durham Trust*
- *Focus Easington*

ACTION: Board Members present approved this. Partner representatives not present to be contacted as per item 10, b. (iv.) above.

Age UK Proposal

As above, Item 10, b. (iv.) applied.

IM outlined a proposal which has come forward from Age UK County Durham for up £15,000. This is currently being looked by a subgroup of the MSFOOC Priority Group. The application will be sent to the Board once finalised.

IM asked the Board if they approved to the £15,000 of Area Budget being ring fenced for this project.

ACTION: Board Members present approved this. Partner representatives not present to be contacted as per item 10, b. (iv.) above.

Local Networks Update

IM updated that a report is going to the Cabinet meeting on 13th November to give confirmation on the Local Network areas.

6. Any Other Business

None raised.

7. Time and Date of Next Meeting:

Wednesday 11th December 2024, 6pm
The Glebe Centre, Murton