

## DERWENT VALLEY PARTNERSHIP (DVP) BOARD MEETING

28 September 2022, Salvation Army Hall, Consett at 6pm



### **Elected Representatives**

Cllrs Veronica Andrews, Stephen Robinson (Vice Chair), Kathryn Rooney, Alan Shield, Michelle Walton and Alex Watson

### **Partner Organisations**

Mark Clelland (Chair) (Derwentside Trust), Rachel Rooney (Integrated Care Board) and Joanne Waller (Durham County Council (DCC))

### **Public Representatives**

Lea McConnell, Susan Mellor (Vice Chair) and Fraser Neill

### **DVP:**

Fiona Kelly (AAP Co-ordinator), Kath Clements and Laura Sloan (Community Development Project Officers) and Lynn Dougal (Support Officer)

### **Members of the Public: 11**

**Presenter:** Maxine Houston, ERS Research and Consultancy

### **Apologies:**

Partner Reps: Craig Farrage (Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service), Philip Pollard (Karbon Homes) and Sgt Ian Raine (Durham Constabulary). Public Reps: Linda Acres and Helen Marley.

### **1. Meeting opened by the Chair**

Mark Clelland welcomed everyone to the meeting and Fiona Kelly went through housekeeping.

Board members introduced themselves and apologies were noted as above. Declarations of interest were made, under the Task Group Updates agenda item, from Fraser Neill regarding FFG Foundation funding application and Cllr Watson regarding the Friends of Blackhill and Consett funding application as he attends their meetings, and from Cllr Shield, under the Community Engagement Review agenda item, as he sits on the newly formed committee linked to the review.

### **2. Minutes of Previous Board Meeting (20 July 2022)**

#### *Matters arising*

Following the Poverty Strategy and Action Plan Consultation at the July Board meeting and the current cost of living crisis, Fiona advised that we have received quite a few enquiries regarding the Council's plans in response to provision/support at a community level. Although the DVP has set priorities for this year, it is possible for the DVP to set up a time limited working group to look

at the issues emerging as a result of the cost of living crisis. There is a small budget available, due to an underspend from previous years, that can be used to fund any activities/projects.

An email will be sent to Board members asking them if they would like to be involved in a working group and the invitation was also extended to Forum members.

Cllr Andrews said that PowerGrid will have a new fund available of £7.5m which is open to communities towards heating costs, for example. There will be a meeting held in Dipton Community Centre on 14 October with PowerGrid.

It was noted that information around warm hubs will be communicated in due course.

There were no further comments/matters arising and the minutes were AGREED.

### **3. Christmas in Consett 2022**

Further to the discussion at the last Board meeting about holding a Christmas event and the uncertainty around the improvement works in Middle Street, it is not expected that any further works will be scheduled for later this year.

Should the Board agree to hold a Christmas event in Consett, an event management organisation would be brought in to deliver it. It would be a free family event and have a similar format to previously held Christmas events, eg Christmas jumper competition, entertainment (which could include a local group/band) and a Christmas tree lights switch on.

The cost of the event would be approx £6,500 which would include event management, staging and sound/lighting, entertainment and support fees and publicity costs.

Comments raised included:

- Holding the event in Albert Street car park. However it was noted that as the event included a Christmas tree lights switch on, it would be beneficial for it to take place near the Christmas tree.
- Despite the current climate, a Christmas event would be something positive for residents.
- Providing low cost or free hot food/drinks.
- Asking the local supermarkets if they would like to contribute by providing drinks/treats.
- There were concerns around free/reduced cost provisions as they could affect local traders.

The Board were happy to support a Christmas event and APPROVED the funding of £6,500 from the 2022/23 Area Budget.

### **4. Community Engagement Review**

Due to the presenter being held up enroute this item was presented after Item 5 on the agenda.

*Maxine Houston, Principal Consultant with ERS gave a presentation on the Community Engagement Review (a copy of the presentation is available upon request).*

ERS staff are going out to all AAP Board meetings, meeting with AAP Coordinators and holding Envisioning Events, both online and in person, to gain an insight on the different roles of the AAPs and to gather as much information from as many people and key stakeholders as possible about the AAPs.

The consultants are planning to take an inclusive, innovative and informed approach to consultation, to inform possible options by looking at Needs and Opportunities, AAP Evaluation and Innovation and Best Practice.

Once the review is completed, it is anticipated that an initial report will be available in October/November with a final report and recommendations made to DCC Cabinet in December 2022.

Following the presentation, comments/questions raised included:

- How do you propose to measure value for money that the AAPs provide?  
There was no definitive answer as there are a lot of things to take into account.
- Will the public be consulted to find out what they know about the AAP?  
As well as collecting people's views, ERS will also be looking at examples of best practice from elsewhere.
- Two areas for concern were the level of governance between different AAPs and the funding process is very bureaucratic.
- Community engagement is a key element and we need to get closer to the community to be able to help them to get things done.
- To consider the AAP's purpose and to be more clear on what that is. Also to have clarity around the role of a Board member, ie participates as a partner rep but can we comment as someone who also lives locally on the various issues?
- The formality of the Board environment is off putting and can be quite intimidating and needs to be modernised.
- Due to the limited number/location of the envisioning events, it will restrict the amount of people from participating in the review.  
ERS will look into this to try and accommodate as many people as possible.
- For those that could not attend an event, it was felt that the questionnaire provided was insufficient and did not allow for free comment.  
The questionnaire was based on the terms of reference for AAPs.
- Using an interactive platform, eg Mentimeter, would be useful for people to post comments, see what other people's feedback is, encourage more input, draw out more conversations, etc.
- It was acknowledged that individual interviews would include Board members and elected representatives and it would also be useful to include Chairs of the Task Groups, industrialists, Consett Academy and young people.
- It was felt that some projects that address issues identified in the task groups' action plans are being disregarded.
- In the early years of the AAP Board, Board members tried to make it a pressure group (despite opposition from DCC) and it was felt that the way issues are addressed are no different now to what they were back then and that changes need to be made.

Maxine thanked everyone for their comments and for those suggestions on how they can collect information and give everyone the opportunity to be involved.

## 5. Task Group Updates

Fiona gave an update on the work of the task groups, which Board members had received a copy of the information prior to the meeting.

### *Towns and Villages Task Group*

At the last Board meeting the two project proposals (totalling £110k) that were approved by the Board are in progress.

The task group agreed to notionally allocate the remaining £100k to town centre focused initiatives. Therefore a survey with town centre businesses was undertaken to ascertain the main issues. Forty five businesses engaged with DCC officers and provided information in response to the questions set. Those businesses that were unable to meet with the officers were left the information.

A summary of the findings is as follows:

- Empty shops/variety of shops
- Lack of footfall
- Parking
- Middle Street Improvements
- Events/activities
- Business support
- Arcade\*
- Cleanliness/maintenance
- ASB
- Market
- Rats and pigeons
- Shop fronts

\*It was noted that an application from Project Genesis Trust has been received by the DVP to address the issues with the arcade and will be funded via Cllr Watson's Neighbourhood Budget.

Not all of the issues are within the remit of the task group and some of the issues identified can be passed onto the relevant services within the Council. The findings may help give the task group a steer on what areas of work need addressing and what happens next in terms of the funding.

The task group also had two project proposals that they were still considering and after further discussions they would like to recommend the following:

- ❖ Not to fund the proposal by Project Genesis Trust for a Town Centre Manager at a funding request of £180k.

- ❖ To fund a proposal received by DCC Low Carbon Economy Team, Decarbonising Derwent Valley. Funding request of £56,000 (with £24k match funding).

Through the recruitment of an apprentice, working alongside the Business Energy Efficiency Project (BEEP) team, businesses in the Derwent Valley area will be given support and advice on their energy consumption and how to reduce it. The funding would also be used for businesses to apply for an energy efficiency grant.

Cllr Shield asked what the terms of reference is for the various retail units across all of the Derwent Valley area that can be considered for this. Fiona said if they are based in the Derwent Valley then they can be included, however the majority of businesses are in the Consett area.

Rachel Rooney wondered what the link is between the project proposal and the town centre survey findings as it does not address the issues that were highlighted. Fiona advised that it is around the business support element and how they can be helped to reduce their energy costs.

Cllr Shield said he supports the project and would like to know what the outcomes are and an update on whether the project has been successful or not.

Cllr Watson concurs with Cllr Shield as well as receiving updates on the Community Speedwatch Vehicle (approved at July Board meeting) and if match funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner has been secured. Fiona advised that we have not received confirmation about the match funding as yet and still waiting to hear back.

Fiona said that all projects that have been funded (as well as those to be funded) will be subjected to regular monitoring.

There were no further comments and the Board APPROVED to fund the Low Carbon Economy Team £56,000 from the Towns and Villages Improvement Fund (T&V).

There still remains £44,000 in the T&V budget and DVP Officers will look into the suggestions put forward such as ideas to promote the town centre, eg digital options, and events/activities. An update will be given at the next task group meeting on 9 November.

#### *Employment, Enterprise and Training Task Group*

At the last task group meeting on 8 September the group received 2 presentations – one from Phil Jackman, Director of CyberNorth on Cyber Security: threat and opportunity and the other from Mark Boyd, DurhamWorks and Nina Canavan, Employability Durham on employability gaps and challenges in the Derwent Valley area.

The task group will be meeting on 12 October to review project proposals that the group received with recommendations being made to the Board at the November Board meeting.

#### *Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Task Group*

Following the call out for project proposals, that went out on 28 July, ten completed funding applications were received (with one being ineligible) by the deadline on 30 August 2022. The

total amount of funding requested from the 9 applications was £79,309 and with a budget of £39,967 we were oversubscribed by £39,342.

Task group members received copies of the funding applications to review and questions were sent to the applicants. The responses were received prior to the applicants being invited to attend a task group meeting (on 14 September) to present their projects and answer any additional questions.

Individual task group members scored each project proposal, against set criteria, based on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Each project proposal was given a total average score, ranked in order (from highest to lowest) and the group agreed they would like to recommend the top 4 projects to the Board for funding.

The following 5 projects were not recommended to the Board for funding:

1. **FFG Foundation**, Working in partnerships to tackle mental health within the Derwent Valley area. Funding request £15,000.
2. **Sport Works**, Head, Heart and Health. Funding request £9,330.
3. **Building Self Belief**, Post Covid-19 – Teenage Mental Health Group with a Focus on Bereavement and Loss. Funding request £7,980.
4. **Bullying Intervention Group**, BIG Anti-Bullying Award. Funding request £6,000.
5. **Medomsley Cricket Club**, Women's cricket development/establishment. Funding request £7,620.

The following 4 projects were recommended to the Board for funding:

1. **Just Love**, We've Got You! Funding request £11,393.

Providing home and hygiene products via schools, foodbanks and other community settings to people suffering hygiene poverty.

John O'Connor (Forum and Chair of the HWB Task Group) said that the task group spent all day looking at the proposals and meeting the applicants. The group were very impressed with the project and as there is an underspend (linked to the HWB Task Group), the group would like to recommend that this is allocated to the Just Love project.

Cllr Shield said the Durham Christian Partnership is happy to accommodate the stock from the Just Love project in their warehouse in Chester le Street. He also said that the Government has extended the Period Product Scheme to schools until July 2025. However Just Love has extended their packs beyond the schools that include other hygiene products and some household products for older people and are looking to roll this out across County Durham. He said he is happy to support this project and suggested that the underspend is added to the project.

The Board APPROVED to fund Just Love £11,393 from the 2022/23 Area Budget.

Fiona will go back to Just Love to ascertain if they could accommodate the underspend to enhance their project. The Board AGREED in principle to allocate the underspend of £6,588 to Just Love, subject to confirmation from the applicant.

2. **Friends of Blackhill and Consett Park**, Community Garden Wellbeing Programme 2023. Funding request £7,000.

A skilled tutor to develop the community garden with various activities that can help address social isolation and other health and wellbeing needs.

It was noted that within the HWB Action Plan it includes improving mental health and social isolation and that some projects may address these indirectly.

There were no comments raised and the Board APPROVED to fund the Friends of Blackhill and Consett Park £7,000 from the 2022/23 Area Budget.

3. **Continuum CIC**, I am ME. Funding request £5,000.

The I am ME programme (Independent, Assertive, Mature, Motivated and Empowered) will deliver themed workshops targeting young people at risk of entering into a cycle of disengagement.

Cllr Shield asked what the age profile is. It was noted that it was 11-16 year olds.

Cllr Robinson asked how they were getting the young people and are they getting referrals through the schools? Based on the information in the application, it was noted that they would be 'using their networks and community reach to be able to meet their quota'.

Cllr Robinson said that at the place where he works, there are around 56 challenging kids every day and they do not get that kind of help. Fiona suggested contacting the applicant so they can get in touch with Cllr Robinson to discuss potentially linking in with the referrals.

There were no further comments raised and the Board APPROVED to fund Continuum CIC £5,000 from the 2022/23 Area Budget.

4. **Learning for Life**, Sensory, Sound and Vision. Funding request £9,986

To enhance the multi-use sensory garden for its learners through walkways, rest areas and planting and to participate in outdoor activities.

There were no comments raised and the Board APPROVED to fund Learning for Life £9,986 from the 2022/23 Area Budget.

Full funding applications have been received from the applicants and they will be passed to the Funding Team to go through the appraisal process.

#### *Environment Task Group*

Unfortunately due to low attendance at previous meetings, the task group has been unable to set their action plan. A meeting is planned for 3 October where they will discuss the action plan and receive a presentation from the Low Carbon Economy Team. Once the action plan has been

finalised the group will be looking at potential projects for recommendation to the Board in due course.

## **6. Meeting Close and Date of Next Meeting**

The Board agreed to hold the next meeting in person rather than on Teams. However, should the weather take a turn for the worse, it will be held via Teams.

Mark thanked Maxine for her presentation and thanked everyone for their attendance.

The next Board meeting will be on Wednesday 30 November 2022 at 6pm at The Salvation Army Hall, Consett.