

DERWENT VALLEY PARTNERSHIP (DVP) BOARD MEETING MINUTES

30 November 2022, Salvation Army Hall, Consett at 6pm



Elected Representatives

Stephen Robinson (Vice Chair), Kathryn Rooney, Michelle Walton and Alex Watson

Partner Organisations

Mark Clelland (Chair) (Derwentside Trust), Philip Pollard (Karbon Homes) and Alison Lazazzera (Durham County Council (DCC))

Public Representatives

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

DVP:

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

Members of the Public: 12

Presenter: Alison Lazazzera, DCC

Apologies:

Elected Reps: Cllrs Veronica Andrews and Alan Shield. Partner Reps: Craig Farrage (Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service) and Rachel Rooney (Integrated Care Board). Public Rep: Linda Acres.

1. Meeting opened by the Chair

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

Board members introduced themselves, apologies were noted as above and there were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of Previous Board Meeting (28 September 2022)

Matters arising

Regarding the DVP's free Christmas event on 1 December on Middle Street, Consett. It has been promoted widely, eg via local schools, social media and community venues. The event will start at 5.30pm ending with a Christmas tree lights switch on at 7pm.

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

3. 2023/24 Durham County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation

Alison Lazazzera, Head of HR and Employee Services, DCC, gave a presentation on the Durham County Council Budget Consultation

Alison gave an overview on DCC's Budget for 2022/23, the Council Tax position, Budget pressures DCC is facing, the proposed approach for balancing the Budget in 2023/24 and the consultation process (a copy of the presentation is available upon request).

The consultation is open to members of the public, partners, voluntary and community sector and other stakeholders via an online survey as well as paper copies available in community venues.

Board and Forum members were asked for their views on:

- DCC's approach to balancing the 2023/24 forecast budget shortfall
- What will be the impact of this approach upon you or those you represent?
- Alternatives to the approach, whilst making the required savings
- The council utilising additional council tax raising powers if provided by government over the current 2.99% forecast

Following the consultation, a budget report will be presented to Cabinet on 8 February 2023 with budget proposals presented to Full Council on 22 February 2023 where budget approval and council tax for 2023/24 will be set.

Work is underway to identify further budget savings to meet the shortfall expected in 2023/24 - 2026/27. A consultation in 2023 will take place to help formulate budget plans for the coming years.

The online survey can be accessed via the following link <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/AAPBudget2324>. The link will also be circulated to Board and Forum members with paper copies made available via the DVP.

Cllr Watson suggested that the public should be consulted on whether they wish to increase the council tax beyond 2.99% as a higher council tax increase could help mitigate cuts in council services. He also asked for statutory and non-statutory services to be made known to the public so they are aware of which service areas can and cannot be reduced.

Alison explained that many non-statutory services support statutory services. However, there is a process across all the service areas where they are looking at statutory and non-statutory services and potential solutions to contribute to savings.

Rosemary Morris (Forum) said that as DCC has identified more and better jobs as part of its vision, they should take a leading role on developing the skills base to assist local people into higher paying sustainable employment. She also wondered what DCC's thoughts were on devolution and joining up with other authorities in the North East.

Alison advised that DCC has recently appointed a Head of Economic Development and there is an Economic Development Strategy to help raise the profile of County Durham to bring in investment, new businesses and the skills needed through linking in with schools, colleges, the university and apprenticeships.

Cllr Watson advised that devolution was due to be discussed at Council next week.

John O'Connor (Forum) said he would like to see something in the plan about borrowing to invest, which could for example fund more house building. Cllr Watson said that borrowing to invest is being looked at in the management plan.

Mark thanked Alison for the presentation and input at the meeting.

4. Task Group Updates

Fiona gave an update on the work of the four task groups.

Towns and Villages (T&V) Task Group

The group met on 9 November and received an update on the 3 projects that have previously been supported by the Board:

- Business Energy Efficiency project (£56K) is going through the appraisal process.
- Community Speedwatch Vehicle (approx £38k), match funding has now been sought and will progress to the appraisal process.
- Traffic and Speed Management project (approx £72k). The applicant will put together a list of what can be achieved with the funding and the contents will be consulted on with task group members before the application is submitted.

The group discussed potential projects to allocate the remaining budget of £44,000 for the town centre and costs are being sought around digital promotion (noticeboard, website) and holding some events.

Neighbourhood Planning (NP)

T&V Task Group members and some councillors requested the group look more closely at NP. The Government definition of NP is 'giving communities power to develop the shared vision for their area and to shape the development of growth of the local area'.

At the next task group meeting on 11 January via Teams, a member of DCC's Planning and Policy team will be attending to give more information on NP. As there is no town or parish council in the DVP area to take NP issues forward, it may be that some kind of forum is set up however this is not likely to be led by the AAP.

Regarding the Speedwatch vehicle project, a Board discussion took place around the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) making a contribution to the project. Although the PCC has contributed to this type of project in other AAP areas, there has been no indication from the PCC

Office that they will do so in the DVP area. The Neighbourhood Policing Team have made a contribution to the Speedwatch vehicle via on-costs, ie maintenance, insurance, fuel.

Employment, Enterprise and Training (EET) Task Group

Following the call out for projects, that ended on 30 August 2022, the group received 4 completed funding applications. The total budget available was £25,438 and the total amount of funding requested was £52,990.

The group received a project proposal from Durham Constabulary - Mini Police - (not part of the call out), however as the proposal does not fit with the DVP priorities (Employment, Health and Environment), it was not scored.

Task group members received copies of the funding applications to review and questions were sent to the applicants.

The task group met on 12 October to discuss the project proposals and scored them accordingly. 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 scoring project only to the Board for funding.

The following 3 projects were not recommended to the Board for funding:

1. **Celebrate Difference.** The Hub, Consett. Funding request £20,000
2. **FFG Foundation.** Tackling unemployment within the Derwent Valley. Funding request £15,000
3. **Bring Words to Life.** Write 2. Funding request £11,700

The following project was recommended to the Board for funding:

1. **DurhamWorks.** DurhamWorks. Funding request £10,670
Providing one to one support to help young people (aged between 16 and 24 and some older clients with disabilities) to obtain the skills, qualifications and experience they need to enter into work, volunteering, further learning or training.

Cllr Watson thought that the Mini Police project was a successful programme and wondered why it came last in the scoring. Fiona advised that although the group thought it was a good project, they did not score it as it did not fit the themes within the group's action plan nor did it fit with the DVP's priorities.

The Board APPROVED to fund DurhamWorks £10,670 from the 2022/23 Area Budget.

The Task Group will continue to meet to discuss further project ideas to allocate the remaining budget of £14,768, with proposals coming to the Board in due course.

Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Task Group

There were no updates on the work of the HWB Task Group as they have allocated all of their funding for 2022/23.

A call out for project proposals for the Older Person's Social Isolation Fund (OPSIF) and Healthy Relationships Fund (HRF) is currently ongoing. The completed applications will be handled via the HWB Task Group rather than set up another group. Members from the other Task Groups, Board and Forum members are welcome to join the group to review the applications.

- £25,000 is available for projects that address social isolation in the over 50s (OPSIF) with a minimum grant of £5,000.
- £10,000 is available to support community led initiatives that improve support to children and young people around topics such as domestic abuse and ensure that there is a greater focus on prevention and early intervention (HRF). The minimum grant is £2,000.

Application packs are available via the DVP Team. Closing date for completed applications is 12 December 2022.

The group will be meeting on 11 January 2023 to review/assess the completed funding applications with recommendations going to the January Board meeting.

Environment Task Group

The group met on 24 November to finalise and agree the action plan. A call out for projects linked to the themes in the action plan will be issued shortly with a closing date in January 2023.

The group will meet again in January/February (date and venue to be advised) to review the project proposals with recommendations coming to the Board in due course.

5. Cost of Living Meeting Feedback

Fiona gave an update on the Cost of Living meeting that was held on 8 November. The group received an update on the work of the Poverty Action Steering Group and on the Warm Spaces initiative. County Durham Community Foundation (CDCF) is administering a funding pot of £200k, for community and voluntary groups and community buildings to apply for funding to help deliver warm spaces.

The group also acknowledged that some of the projects supported via our task groups (ie Health and Towns and Villages) have indirectly addressed cost of living issues such as the Just Love project (hygiene products) and the Business Energy Efficiency Project (helping businesses to become more energy efficient).

The DVP Team has requested information from community buildings in the Partnership area to enquire what provision, access, etc they have in relation to warm spaces. This is to try and get an overview of what is available and identify if there are any gaps that may need assistance. However, to date, the response has not been good.

Mark thought that the Warm Spaces application was an arduous process and may put some people off applying and that it should be simplified.

Lea McConnell suggested that there should be joined up working across the county to offer provision 7 days a week for those people in need.

Susan Mellor said that Consett Methodist Church has been allocated funding to set up as a warm space and is open Monday to Friday, 9.30am-12noon.

Philip Pollard said that Karbon Homes' Skills Hub building in Stanley offers a warm space on a Thursday afternoon and gives wrap around support through their Money Matters adviser. He said that they are happy to provide this kind of advice in the Consett area if there is a suitable place to accommodate them.

Fraser Neill advised that the FFG Foundation in Consett is a warm space Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm and on a Saturday and Sunday from 10am-2pm.

Due to the issue highlighted around the application process, Fiona will contact CDCF to make them aware of this. She also said that the DVP Team could offer support to anyone encountering difficulties when completing the form and should we get a lot of enquiries we could look at holding an information session.

A Forum member asked if there was a vetting process for community buildings to become a warm space. Fiona advised that there is a charter that goes alongside the funding criteria and that community venues will have their own checking process as well.

Tracy from Morrisons asked if they could apply for funding as a warm space in their café. Fiona said it would depend on the funding criteria and may be allocated to community and voluntary organisations only.

6. Monitoring Report

Projects funded by the DVP are subjected to regular monitoring, generally on a quarterly basis and when a project is completed. Monitoring includes, for example, what they spent the money on, what the outcomes were and what they achieved.

Currently the report includes over 35 projects (funded via the amalgamated Area Budget) and gives a synopsis on each project; full monitoring information is available should Board members wish to them. Fiona advised that the report will be circulated to Board members.

The report will also be shared with the Task Groups where they can look at it in more depth.

Most of the projects have done very well and achieved what they set out to do, despite some projects being delayed due to Covid-19. We are working with a small amount of project deliverers to help them overcome any issues around delivery.

7. Meeting Close and Date of Next Meeting

Mark thanked everyone for their attendance.

Before the meeting closed, the Board considered holding the next Board meeting on Teams but agreed to hold it in person.

The next Board meeting will be on Wednesday 25 January 2023 at 6pm at The Salvation Army Hall, Consett. However, should the weather take a turn for the worse, it will be held via Teams.