



Better for everyone

**GREAT AYCLIFFE & MIDDRIDGE PARTNERSHIP (GAMP)
MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2022, 6:00PM (VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS)**

PRESENT:

Cllr Eddy Adam – DCC, Cllr James Atkinson – DCC (Chair), Cllr Ken Robson – DCC, Cllr David Sutton-Lloyd – DCC, Cllr Tony Towers – Midldridge Parish, Sue Cooke, Julie Dudley, Simon Hocking, Sue Hughes, Peter Shovlin, Natalie Whitworth (Vice Chair), Daniel Blagdon – Health Representative, Andy Coulthard – Livin Housing Representative (Vice Chair), Insp Sarah Honeyman – Police Representative, Oliver Sherratt – DCC Head of Service Representative, Malcolm Woodward – Fire Service Representative, Rosie Woodward – Business Representative, Brian Riley – GAMP Coordinator, Victoria Grieves – GAMP Community Development Project Officer, Paula Stockport – GAMP Support Officer, Angela Blanchard – GAMP Towns & Villages Community Development Project Officer

APOLOGIES:

Chris Hutchinson, Cllr Neville Jones, Cllr Tony Stubbs

OBSERVERS:

Mr B Adamson

Standard Board Meeting

1. Introductions & Apologies

Cllr JA opened the meeting, reminding Board members of the standard Declaration of Interest item on the agenda. Cllr JA informed observers they would be welcome to comment under Items 3 and 4 on the agenda.

Cllr JA welcomed Sue Hughes to her first Board meeting as Public Representative.

BR confirmed that apologies for absence had been received, as noted above.

2. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 27.9.22 – Matters Arising

BR confirmed that the draft minutes from the Board meeting held on 27.9.22 had been circulated in advance with the meeting papers; there were no outstanding actions.

There were no matters arising, and the minutes of the last meeting were **AGREED** by the Board as a true and accurate record.

3. Countywide Partner Issues

3.1 DCC 2023/24 Budget Consultation (Oliver Sherratt)

Board members received an update presentation in relation to the Council's current 2023/24 budget consultation. OS gave an outline of the council budget for the current financial year, the Council Tax position, budget pressures, and the proposed approach for balancing the budget in 2023/24.

OS outlined the key questions being asked of AAPs:

- What is the AAP view on our approach to balancing the 2023/24 forecast budget shortfall?
- What do you feel will be the impact of this approach upon you or those you represent?
- Do you have any alternatives to the approach, whilst making the required savings?
- If the government do remove the cap, what is your view on the council utilising additional Council Tax raising powers above the current 2.99% forecast, given that we may be expected to do this?

A Q&A session was opened, and the following points were noted:

- Cllr JA asked if the AAP review would be factored into budget reductions. OS clarified that whilst there was no specific savings target linked to the Review, there might be savings opportunities arising as well as a wider review of funding allocated to AAP budgets, vacant posts etc.
- Insp SH commented that the cost of living situation is impacting on everyone and would not be supportive of any Council Tax rise above 2.99%.
- Insp SH made a suggestion that illegal parking is common place e.g. around schools and other areas, causing safety issues. DCC should consider raising income from fines, this would be a win for safety and a win for income. OS will feed this point back to the Consultation team.
- PS asked whether Durham is disadvantaged financially as a result of not having a mayor and asked whether devolution would bring in extra income. OS confirmed that it may bring with it some additional government funding but more so around infrastructure etc. OS added that devolution decisions have not been concluded yet.
- AC asked whether any proposed Council Tax increase would be separate to Town & Parish precepts, Police, Fire etc – OS clarified this relates to Council tax – and is separate although the other precepts are collected by the Council.
- SC commented that residents in Band D and upwards are already being squeezed, and would not be in favour of any additional Council Tax increase.
- Cllr EA acknowledged that DCC has a huge 'black hole' to fill, commenting that a number of the extra costs and savings required are external and beyond DCC's control. Cllr EA did however comment on the recent funding of £600k for a culture venue that may not get off the ground, and additional maintenance costs for the existing County Hall site at £100k which could have been avoided. Cllr EA added that by freezing Council Tax last year, this actually cost ordinary taxpayers more this year, and resulted in a loss to DCC of £5m; Council Tax freezes don't help the current situation and only serve to reduce what DCC can spend going forward, so there are limited options in this regard in Cllr EA's view.
- Cllr EA asked if it's correct that DCC were overspent by £15m last year. OS agreed to clarify the position on this separately with the Head of Finance.

- Cllr EA asked about reserves - if DCC uses reserves at £25.6m, how much longer will they last? Again, OS will clarify (**Action 1: OS**).
- Cllr EA asked if there could be any guarantee that the proposed back-office savings wouldn't impact on front line services. OS confirmed he couldn't give that assurance, other than to say that savings would always be devised to minimise front line impacts.
- Cllr Adam suggested that DCC lobby Government, 10 years of austerity has impacted on local authorities without question, and the Govt is realistically the only organisation who can make any meaningful impact on local authority spending.

BR confirmed, for the minutes, all information circulated by email from the GAMP team since the last meeting:

- DCC's Antisocial Behaviour Strategy consultation (3.10.22);
- Building Community Flood Resilience info from the Environment Agency (6.10.22);
- DCC's Climate County Durham webinar info (14.10.22);
- DCC 2023/24 Budget Consultation info (26.10.22);
- DCC's physical activity consultation (1.11.22);
- Parliamentary Boundary Commission consultation info (8.11.22);
- GAMP ebulletin (22.11.22);
- Potential new Local Council Boundary Consultation info (23.11.22).

There were no additional partner updates. BR reminded partners to get in touch if they need space on a future meeting agenda.

4. Local Neighbourhood Issues

4.1 Neighbourhood Policing Update

Insp SH updated Board members in relation to antisocial behaviour figures, local PACT priorities and meeting dates, and current/emerging issues.

Insp SH updated on a serious incident which had taken place over the weekend in the Ashfield area involving several males. Insp SH clarified that a serious impact exercise was carried out, and offered assurances that the wider community are not at any risk; the males involved are all known to each other, and hopefully this was an isolated incident.

Insp SH reminded Board members about the Christmas Extravaganza event that's taking place at the Big Club on 3 & 4 December. The grotto is looking fantastic and it's hoped that this will be a wonderful event for families, it's free to attend and there'll be fantastic presents for the children and some great raffle prizes.

Insp SH reminded Board members to spread the word about being vigilant now that the dark nights are here, and the importance of keeping vehicles and homes secure at all times.

Insp SH thanked everyone on behalf of the neighbourhood policing team for the continued support; Newton Aycliffe is a wonderful town, with great Councillors and a great local community.

BR confirmed that a copy of Insp SH's update report will be circulated with the minutes.

5. GAMP Coordinator's Update

5.1 2022-23 Area Budget (AB) Update

BR gave Board members a brief update in relation to this year's Area Budget project callout. The 14 successful projects that were agreed following the ranking panel meeting have now been technically appraised and all but one project has received their grant offer. We should hopefully be seeing the projects starting in our area over the coming weeks. BR thanked Victoria and Paula for their work in processing this year's Area Budget projects, and also noted thanks to the Funding Team for appraising our projects so quickly.

BR updated Board members in relation to this year's additional £10k Healthy Relationships funding allocation. We have received an Expression of Interest from a suitable organisation with a proposal which meets the specific criteria for this funding, and this has been agreed in principle by our Chair and Vice Chairs. The applicant is currently in the process of working on their funding application form, which will come to the full Board in due course for final approval and ratification.

5.2 Towns & Villages (T&Vs) Funding Update

BR confirmed that little progress has been made with this funding since the last Board meeting, but the next subgroup meeting is due to take place on 1 December and BR will keep Board members updated on progress of spend with this funding going forward.

5.3 Community Engagement Review

BR confirmed that some briefing sessions/workshops were held with AAP staff as part of the review process following the presentation from ERS at our last Board meeting. BR understands that an 'initial findings' report was due to be presented to the Council's steering group within the last couple of weeks, but AAP staff have received no further information on the review to date. BR understands that the consultant's final report should be completed by the end of this calendar year and BR will keep Board members updated.

5.4 2023 Board Meeting Dates

BR confirmed that a list of our 2023 Board meeting dates had been circulated with the meeting papers, for Board members to diary.

Items Not on the Agenda

BR reminded Elected Members, as per Gordon Elliott's previous correspondence, in relation to their Neighbourhood Budgets this year; no carry forward of any unallocated NB funding will be permitted into 2023/24, and so Cllrs should be ensuring they have clear spending plans in place as soon as possible – one, to make sure that no funding is lost, and two, to assist our Funding Team with any possible bottlenecks with applications being submitted at the last minute. Victoria updates Cllrs regularly in relation to current balances. Cllrs should contact Victoria if they have any questions in relation to their NB.

6. Date/Time of Next Meeting:

Tuesday 31 January 2023, 6:00pm, Microsoft Teams

Cllr JA/BR thanked all attendees, and the meeting was closed.