Durham Community Engagement Review

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Executive Summary

What are the positives of the current system?

The AAPs are well established and provide a focus for informing, enabling, and monitoring activity in response on identified community priorities. AAP Board meetings largely operate well in prioritising and managing a range of funding streams. The process for developing, appraising and agreeing projects is robust. AAP Boards provide a space for DCC and partners to consult on key strategies. Task and Finish Groups are effective in developing ideas and solutions to local issues. AAP capacity is invaluable during times of crisis, including the pandemic and the response to Storm Arwen. The AAP Staff Team are exceptionally well regarded and are open to looking at new approaches to delivering positive change for communities.

Why are we making changes?

Our research has identified that AAPs evoke a diverse range of opinions. Nevertheless, in general, levels of satisfaction and support for the principles and functioning of AAPs is high, particularly from people engaged with them.

The diversity and effectiveness of community outreach and engagement has reduced over recent years, in part due to resource pressures across the team. Regular and direct community involvement in AAP Boards is limited to a relatively small number of individuals per AAP, although some areas do perform better in this regard. Our research identified widespread agreement amongst those engaged that opportunities exist to improve how the community are engaged and funding is prioritised.

The AAP approach has become too focussed upon managing funding and not sufficiently focussed on the wider initial AAP objectives of engagement, empowerment and performance review. Significant potential exists to involve many more people via enhanced community engagement and community development.

Opportunities to shape policy or include the voice of diverse communities in partner consultations channelled via the AAP Board are limited. AAP Board meetings routinely spend too much time discussing and agreeing funding proposals rather than enabling open and meaningful consideration of community issues. It is not always clear how the AAPs' identification of local needs is considered in the development of wider strategy and policy by wider partners. There is a requirement to consider how to better inform strategic priorities with local needs assessments and how to respond collectively and efficiently to those needs. Similarly, it is not always clear how the strategies in turn support or impact local decision making by AAP Boards on funding. Funding priorities are driven by community priorities and not sufficiently informed by quantitative data.

Whilst the process of agreeing individual projects is robust, it draws considerable staff resource that should be utilised engaging directly with communities. The funding approval process is intensive for applicants, especially those repeating the process year on year for the same type of intervention. Some organisations do not apply for funding due to process barriers.

There are inconsistencies in how some AAPs operate and some AAP Boards do not function consistently well. The potential for political conflict in some AAPs reduces the effectiveness of partnership working by making Board Meetings more combative in tone. This can act as a disincentive for non-politically motivated people to participate.

What are those changes?

A hyper-local community engagement network is important if DCC is to understand and respond to local needs effectively and involve community partners in creating local action. This is especially relevant in times of crisis, such as the pandemic or Storm Arwen.

The recommendations include the cessation of the current AAP process and associated Boards, to be replaced by more flexible Community Networks that place greater emphasis on community engagement, community development and community capacity building.

There is benefit in retaining the existing boundaries. A further option is that 14 Community Networks reflect the Primary Care Networks (Derwentside PCN split into two), albeit rounded to align with the new electoral ward boundaries due to come into effect in 2025. This latter point would improve alignment with Neighbourhood Budget delivery. Community Networks would have no decision-making role for funding.

We propose streamlining the project approval process. This will enable staff to allocate more time to working in, and with, communities. We propose replacing the Area Budget with a Strategic Grant process that allocates funding on a four-year funding cycle, enabling larger and more strategic projects to be funded that enhance opportunities to attract match-funding. Projects will be developed by DCC Senior Community Coordinators, informed by Community Networks and agreed by a sub-group of the County Durham Partnership. The Neighbourhood Budget would largely remain as present. There would be no requirement for County Councillors to report funding priorities to Community Networks. Community Development Workers would have access to a flexible Community Chest pot to allocate small amounts of funding to kickstart new initiatives. Community Network staff would be based in local community venues.

What are the benefits?

To extract the value of Community Networks, it is essential to reduce the time spent by AAP staff in managing funding to enable their time to be allocated to community engagement and community development to build local capacity. This should include reducing the number of funding transactions, an online system to efficiently manage project applications, output management, finances and reporting, and a streamlined process for funding internal services from DCC departments and other established trusted partners given the reduced level of risk.

Improved focus on community development will enhance the capacity of local communities and individuals to become more involved in improving their area. Prioritisation of funding would be improved by increased analysis of data; wider and more targeted engagement with all communities to inform priorities; greater collaboration across Community Network areas to coordinate interventions over a longer time period and over a wider geographical area; enhanced monitoring of impact and value for money; and remove the perception that funding decisions are made on the views of a relatively limited number of community representatives who often benefit directly from funding.

What are the outcomes for communities?

The Community Networks approach will enhance opportunities for all communities to better engage in issues that impact their lives. They will operate to identify local assets and needs, create opportunities for local action, partnership collaboration, volunteering and co-production of services more comprehensively. More people will understand the aims and objectives of Community Networks, understand how to engage and appreciate the value generated.

1   Introduction and Headline Findings

1.1   Context to Review

In June 2022, ERS was commissioned by Durham County Council (DCC) to undertake a review of Community Engagement across the county.

This report analyses the data from interactions with hundreds of stakeholders, through interviews, focus groups, surveys and observations. It tells the story of delivery covering management and governance; the challenges faced; performance and positive impacts; and makes recommendations for improvement against the context of increasing DCC budgetary pressures.

Our focus for the consultation has been upon engaging stakeholders with an existing appreciation of how AAPs currently operate. Our approach has been to understand different perspectives in regard to what works well, what doesn't, what needs to improve and why.

We recognise that different stakeholders each have much to gain (or lose) from either retaining, slightly amending or radically overhauling the approach to determining priorities, influencing policy and the allocation of funding at a locality level. We have had to understand the background to the views expressed to us through the inclusive approach to engagement in this review.

At the outset of the review there was no requirement within the agreed scope to focus upon reducing the cost requirements related to AAP delivery. There was an emphasis upon value for money. As the review has progressed, it has become evident of the scale of budgetary pressures faced by DCC in setting the budget for 2023/24. In this review we have sought to prioritise the 'must have' elements of community engagement. Staffing resource to deliver effective frontline community engagement and community development should be protected.

1.2   Key Findings

Our research found widespread support for components of the AAP model. DCC Cabinet regard AAPs as an important mechanism to enable DCC to engage at a local level, facilitating interactions with the community and there is a willingness to support successful elements of the current model.

AAP staff are generally highly experienced, skilled and committed to their roles and to the principles of community engagement. AAP teams have established knowledge of community assets and networks with local organisations. Significant knowledge of internal DCC departments, key contacts and processes has also been developed by AAP teams, who act as two-way connectors between communities, voluntary sector organisation, DCC structures and County Councillors.

A local hyper-local community engagement network is important if DCC is to understand and respond to local needs effectively and involve community partners in creating local action. Effective community engagement activity is essential to allow DCC to respond to local needs. This is especially relevant in times of crisis, such as the pandemic or Storm Arwen.

Our research has identified that AAPs evoke a diverse range of opinions and views. Nevertheless, in general, levels of satisfaction and support for the principles and functioning of AAPs and their staff is high, particularly from people engaged with them.

There is widespread agreement that opportunities exist to improve how the community are engaged and funding is prioritised.

Funding through AAPs directly benefits the voluntary sector, with an average of £1.1m funding per year provided to VCS organisation of community centres and local assets from the Area Budget in the years to 2019/20. This increased to between £2m-£3m in 2020/21 and 2021/22 with additional funding streams, such as the Covid Recovery Fund.

Most consultees supported the idea of making changes to the current approach to refresh operations. There was lower level of satisfaction with how a small number of AAPs operated, but on closer scrutiny many criticisms (not all) were often found to be based on hearsay or misunderstandings.

There are significant variations in the internal processes of the different AAPs, which can't be explained through adaptation to local requirements or needs.

Satisfaction with the funding processes is low due to a number of reasons:

- The absence of an efficient, intuitive online project application and management system, and related challenges in gaining updates and gathering monitoring information.

- The duration and intensity of the scrutiny process through AAP Task and Finish Groups and then AAP Boards, prior to technical appraisal.

- The process for capital applications is considered onerous. It requires obtaining costings from resource-light internal DCC departments prior to being progressed as applications. This is a particular issue for County Councillors who place a value on expedient delivery.

It should be noted that the processing time for technical appraisals once the application is completed and submitted is regarded as comparable to that of other funders.

The diversity and effectiveness of community outreach and engagement has reduced over recent years. Regular and direct community involvement in AAP Boards is limited to a relatively small number of individuals per AAP, although some areas do perform better in this regard. Reasons for this include:

- AAPs are increasingly used as a mechanism to distribute additional pots of funding and facilitate DCC actions at a local level. AAPs facilitated double the number of schemes in 2021 than in 2017 and this has reduced capacity for staff to deliver proactive community development.

- Significant AAP staff time is utilised providing support to County Councillors with their Neighbourhood Budget.

- The AAPs' terms of reference specify Board Meetings. This structured format of engagement provides high levels of scrutiny but Boards themselves are not regarded as inclusive and accessible for all.

- AAP activities such as participatory budgeting, forum events and innovative and adaptive community engagement have reduced in recent years, in part due to the pandemic.

The statutory duty on DCC to carry out consultation is made relatively straightforward via AAPs. However, on too many occasions this is considered to be a 'tick box' exercise, while opportunities to shape policy or include the voice of diverse communities via the AAP Board are limited. AAP Board meetings routinely spend too much time discussing and agreeing funding proposals rather than enabling open and meaningful consideration of community issues.

In some AAPs there can be a tension between the views of County Councillors and other AAP Board Members. The potential for political conflict in some AAPs reduces the effectiveness of partnership working by making Board Meetings more combative in tone. This can act as a disincentive for non-politically motivated people to participate.

The AAP geographical areas are well established, and AAPs and partners have become familiar with them over time. AAP boundaries do not align with local government ward boundaries or other partner operational boundaries. It is important that the geographical groupings remain local enough that communities feel affinity to them. There is a case for retaining the current boundaries. A further option is that boundaries reflect the 13 Primary Care Networks (Derwentside PCN split into two would lead to 14 area), albeit rounded to align with the new ward boundaries due to come into effect in 2025. This latter point would improve alignment with Neighbourhood Budget delivery.

Links to strategic priorities and the County Durham Partnership could be improved. It is not always clear how the AAPs' identification of local needs is considered in the development of local strategies. There is a requirement to consider how to better inform strategic priorities with local needs assessments and how to respond collectively and efficiently to those needs. Similarly, it is not always clear how the strategies in turn support or impact local decision making or AAP spending.

Given that the new system of locality engagement recommended in this report is significantly different from the current AAP approach, it is recommended that they adopt a new identity. We propose to rebrand the AAP process as Community Networks to more accurately reflect their role in delivering community engagement, community development and community capacity building.

Community Networks should have less focus on delivery of funding, and more focus on community development activities like identification of local assets and needs, creating opportunities for local action, partnership collaboration, volunteering and co-production of services. This should maximise the impact of the work, improving outcomes for communities.

To extract the value of Community Networks, it is essential to reduce pressure on the capacity of AAP staff in managing funding to enable their time to be allocated to community engagement and community development to build local capacity.

This should include reducing the number of funding transactions, an online system to support the funding application and reporting, and a streamlined process for funding internal services from DCC departments given the reduced level of risk.

At this stage we propose variations to the current approach to funding. This is summarised in the table below.

Fund	Value	Decision makers	Criteria
Community Chest	Discretionary up to £300	Community Coordinators/ Community Development Workers	Strict criteria, seed funding for communities only
Neighbourhood Budgets	Medium value	County Councillors	County Councillor led, influenced by local need
Strategic Grants (replace Area Budget)	Large Value	Board representing County Durham Partnership (public and partner representation)	Based on needs profiles identified by area in consultation. Multiple year funding.
External funding streams (Fun and Food, Towns and Villages, etc)	As defined	Co-produced in local areas, informed by Community Networks, but final decisions through Community Coordinators	Based on needs profiles identified by area in consultation.

Improved communication and coordination between Community Networks would improve their impact. This could be achieved through coordinated strategic priority groups, better use of information and data, and improved cooperation with other teams and agencies dedicated to identifying local needs and improving outcomes. The management structure that has Senior Community Coordinators overseeing multiple Community Networks would support this approach.

2   Scope of Review and Approach

This section of the report outlines the scope of the review and the ERS approach to gathering data and insight to inform the conclusions and recommendations. It also outlines the structure of the report.

2.1   Review Scope

DCC Cabinet outlined the scope of the review, as summarised below.

Review Scope
The National Picture – emerging policy   Reflect on what we do well and look at opportunities for future development backed by national good practice.   Review the developing national picture and how community engagement will inform and support the delivery of government strategies such as Levelling Up and Left Behind Neighbourhoods etc.
Community Engagement, Involvement and Consultation   Assessment of the management of various funding programmes currently aligned to AAPs vs staff capacity to support more grass roots community development work.   How do we best integrate the wider engagement needs of the Council and our key partners into an updated or revised delivery model?   Our Council Vision includes 'Connected Communities' engagement will be key to this – what form should that take?
Delivering Change at a Local Level   There is the opportunity to engage on some emerging policy areas to ensure that the Council has a community engagement mechanism that provides support for our communities in line with the Council's future vision and priorities and also reflects the needs of the wider County Durham Partnership.   Review opportunities for local engagement to influence social value and make recommendations for how that could be delivered across County Durham.   How can our communities be involved with the local delivery of the Inclusive Economic Strategy?   Review the scope and range of decisions that could be addressed in local communities in order to achieve better outcomes.   To consider the potential for improved realignment of the council's community engagement resources to support and empower communities to be cohesive and better placed to do things for themselves.

Review Scope
Funding Processes and Timescales Review our funding arrangements for AAP and Councillor focused Neighbourhood Budget grants and timescales for funding awards. Consider any process improvements to ensure the safeguarding of public funds and a clear audit process whilst making speedier decisions.
Current Governance Review of governance and decision-making processes of existing partnership structures, including; consideration of local Board representation; review if the AAP geography is still appropriate after 12 years of operation; and explore how structures best provide effective support to local Councillors.
Influencing Strategy and Planning How we adapt so that we improve local delivery of wider Council priorities and strategies? How do we embed better community resilience planning and response into our engagement work? This was particularly evident from the Storm Arwen experience in Nov 2021. How can future community engagement shape the policy of Council and partner services? How can we deliver more resilient communities by communities taking a greater lead on certain agendas?

2.2 Research Method

Our primary research was supported by desk-based review and analysis of relevant national and local policy and AAP-related material, including annual reports, Terms of Reference, funding data and findings from a County Councillor e-survey undertaken in 2021.

An inclusive approach to involving people in the review was essential throughout, keeping with the spirit of community engagement to ensure that voices are heard. Optimal insight could only be achieved by giving the diverse range of people and partners opportunities to contribute to shaping the future model.

Our approach has included:

● Attendance at each AAP Board to observe activity, highlight the review and listen to perspectives of Board Members. At each meeting we expressed the option for Board Members to contact us directly to arrange a one-to-one meeting, should this be required.

● Facilitation of six visioning events that engaged 122 stakeholders.

● One to one and small group meetings with a wider range of DCC staff, including Senior Managers, Heads of Service, AAP staff at all levels and role, and Towns & Villages support staff.

- Engagement with a number of County Councillors via one to one meetings alongside a session with informal Cabinet.

- One to one and small group interviews with wider partners including Durham Community Partnership, Durham Police, OPCC, Fire Service, Heath partners, and a number of voluntary sector partners that have accessed funding.

- Online workshops from representatives from Town and Parish Councils.

- Circulation and analysis of a stakeholder e-survey that generated 267 responses.

2.3   Structure of the Report

Section 3 of the report summarises the context to AAP delivery alongside the wider community engagement requirements and opportunities across Durham.

Section 4 of the report includes an evaluation of current AAP operations, structured in relation to a logic model that maps the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. It summarises what works well, what works less well and the context for future delivery.

Section 5 of the report outlines the key findings and recommendations in relation to community engagement, community development and capacity building. It makes the case for Community Networks to replace the existing AAP approach.

Section 6 of the report outlines the key findings and recommendations in relation to managing and administering funding.

Section 7 of the report outlines the key findings and recommendations in relation to how Community Networks will be structured geographically and resourced.

3 Community Engagement in County Durham

This section of the report summaries the background and current approach to delivering community engagement via AAPs.

3.1 The Formation of AAPs

AAPs are the principal structure for community engagement across DCC. They were designed as a key feature of the bid in 2008 for DCC to become a Unitary Council. The original objectives were fourfold: engagement; empowerment; local action; and performance review. The original vision is included below.

The AAP is the mechanism through which the Council works with local communities and partner organisations to make sure those local services meet local needs and that the voice of the community is heard within the service development process. The AAP is non-political and enables councillors, residents and partners to come together to influence priorities and take decisions in the light of local needs and circumstances. It focuses on local actions to help the Council and its partners to tackle inequalities and narrow the gap between different areas and it also delivers locally agreed improvements that are important to communities within its area.

There are 14 AAPs. AAP boundaries were determined following a major consultation exercise at the formative stage of AAPs and are shown in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 AAP Arrangement

Each AAP is managed through a Board of 21 people established with equal representation from County Councillors, members of the public, and partner organisations including Police, Fire, Housing and Health. AAPs vary in population size. Some County Councillors automatically have a place on their AAP Board but in larger AAPs a rotation system operates.

AAPs are supported by staff teams consisting of Local Area Coordinators, Community Development Project officers, administrative support staff and staff from the Funding Team.

At the point of inception of the AAP in County Durham, they were regarded as being at the cutting edge of community engagement and development work nationally. Peer challenge for the AAPs in 2012 found that they were 'sound, valued and have exceeded early expectations'. Many other local authorities have visited Durham to understand AAP operations to inform the implementation of their own model.

3.2   Designing and Delivering Local Projects

In the 12 years since the inception of AAPs, £59.5m has been allocated to 10,000+ community-based projects, matched with an additional £69.7m of funding.

Project ideas were intended to be identified through co-productive approach in AAP networks, as well as via call outs or direct approaches from partner organisations. Projects are subject to a process of refinement and scrutiny through AAP Board Meetings. Once applications for funding have been and agreed through AAP Board Meetings, they are submitted to the DCC Funding Teams for technical appraisal and payment. Periodic monitoring against key performance indicators is undertaken once delivery commences.

At present, Area Budgets are allocated evenly across the AAPs, regardless of the population of the AAP area. Some AAPs therefore benefit from a significant budget uplift per head of population.

Approximately 18% of funding goes back to fund DCC services, most commonly highways, environmental projects and to community venues. These tend to be capital projects that come more frequently from County Councillor Neighbourhood Budgets.

There have been significant changes to the scope of action of AAPs in the previous three years with new local coordination responsibilities and emergency response, as well as management and allocation of additional funds. This includes:

- Coordinating local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, offering DCC representation and working with partners on local volunteering and food banks.
- Identifying local need and coordinating the local responses to Storm Arwen.
- Distributing Fun and Food targeting local children and young people in need.
- Distributing funding and coordinating activities for the Platinum Jubilee.
- Distributing the £4m Towns and Villages Fund.
- Coordinating the Warm Spaces response to the cost-of-living crisis.

Whilst there has been benefit of invesment in localities, the proliferation of funding streams and the scale of funding has drawn staff resource away from most of the four core aims of AAPs. There is a requirement to reset the balance. The recommendations as part of this review must consider how enhanced local capacity building can be undertaken to underpin resilience of communities through improved hyper-local infrastructure – both people and organisations.

3.3 Requirement for Community Engagement

DCC has statutory duties that require effective community engagement. These include:

- County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board functions include developing a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to provide evidence of the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the people of County Durham and based on this evidence, developing a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

- The Community Safety Partnership established to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment, and to reduce re-offending.

Some common themes emerged from our needs analysis and policy review, particularly in relation to Levelling Up and the Health and Care Bill that require a place-based community focussed approach to health, wellbeing and economic strategies.

With more limited resources available, local authorities and other statutory bodies are no longer to deliver all the scale of services previously seen. Their role is expected to shift from service provider to anchor institution[1], providing collaborative innovation and pooling resources with partners, to best meet the needs of local communities. This requires:

- Identification of local need through wide community consultation, and the collation and use of local data.

- Strong partnership and collaboration with NHS colleagues, statutory partners and other government institutions, including joint commissioning.

- Partnership with and support of the voluntary sector.

- Sourcing external funding and the involvement of the private sector.

- Supporting communities to help themselves, including through volunteering and collaboration.

It is important that any new model considered how this can be delivered.

In February 2022 the Government published its long-awaited Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper. It includes 12 new missions across four broad areas:

- Boosting productivity and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging;

- Spreading opportunities and improving public services, especially in those areas where they are weakest;

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[1] Anchor institutions must re-imagine how public bodies immerse themselves within local communities | The King's Fund (kingsfund.org.uk)

- Restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost; and

- Empowering local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.

The missions most relevant to the theme of the review includes:

- By 2030, wellbeing will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.

- By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.

- By 2030, homicide, serious violence, and neighbourhood crime will have fallen, focused on the worst-affected areas.

Under each of the above missions is a wider narrative that summarises the ambition of government of how they are to be delivered. There is a clear alignment to the opportunities presented by a new model of community engagement and community development in Durham.

3.4   Community Engagement Via AAPs

AAPs enable community consultation and engagement, including regular Forum events to obtain resident input and agree priorities for each area (although there has been less of this since the pandemic). Each AAP is allocated an Area Budget to spend according to those agreed priorities. AAPs also coordinate local Task & Finish Groups to consider specfic topics of interest, established following discussion at each AAP. Membership is less prescriptive than the AAP Boards and this flexibilty enables (in princple) opportunities for wider involvement.

DCC and partners have a number of teams and mechanisms focussed on community engagement. The DCC Consultation Team are managed within the same department as AAPs and are responsible for supporting DCC departments to carry out meaningful engagement with communities. Other services with engagement functions include Economic Development and Leisure services (amongst others). These describe productive relationships with AAP staff and joint working on specific projects.

Whilst there are plenty of positives to build upon, our research has identified some areas where delivery is less effective due to the governance and wider approach of AAPs.

In principle, AAPs offer a streamlined route for joint working and the sharing of opportunities to consult and communicate. Our view, based on research undertaken, is that that consultation exercises are often 'tick box' exercises managed through presentations to AAPs with limited opportunity for the Board to discuss the detail and influence outcomes.

The AAP Board Meetings overall are not currently established as spaces where a diverse cross sector of the community are represented, attend and engage. The overall number of members of the community is low, although we do recognise that those public representatives are valuable to the process, providing local insight to inform priorities.

Scope for the AAPs to consistently and strategically provide their insights about local needs and opportunities (beyond Area Budget funding priorities) seem to be limited beyond specific work of Task & Finish Groups, partly because of the lack of tangible specific evidence generated from about local need. A system that emphasises more varied methods of community engagement (see Appendix A) would enhance the opportunities to influence wider policy and delivery.

"There could be opportunities to looking at how AAPs could be used better. They are a very effective route to get information out to people, they have really good reach, but they are only on broadcast. How do we get two-way dialogue, and have it fed back?" **Strategic Engagement Partner**

3.5   Improving Links to Health and Wellbeing

Our research has identified opportunities for further joint working with health partners that would improve service design and health outcomes.

Since April 2020, the NHS and DCC have operated as an integrated team in the planning and commissioning of health and care services. There have been ongoing efforts to align the approaches to engaging with residents and listening to their views and experiences of the health and care services provided locally. The creation of a joint Health and Care Public Engagement Forum is being established to underpin community engagement activity.

There was an engagement function for Clinical Commissioning Groups that are now separated into local duties for Primary Care Networks (PCN) linked to the Integrated Care Board (ICB). Engagement is to inform and influence service provision to improve local outcomes. This process is not fully aligned geographically or operationally to AAPs. From a frontline delivery perspective, a number of Community Connectors associated with public health and the COVID response are engaged with AAPs.

Within the Integrated Care System (ICS), place-based partnerships are to lead the detailed design and delivery of integrated services across their localities and neighbourhoods. The partnerships will involve the NHS, DCC, community and voluntary organisations, local residents, people who use services, their carers and representatives and other community partners with a role in supporting the health and wellbeing of the population.

As the ICB develops, and each PCN looks to develop its community engagement function, there is an opportunity for greater collaborative working within an evolving AAP-type model. The potential exists for Community Networks to become an important asset in supporting this shift, from top-down service provision to a less resource intensive, more collaborative bottom-up approach.

Later in this report we consider the approach to locality-based delivery. There is a strong rationale for coterminous boundaries for PCNs and Community Networks.

4 Evaluation of Current AAP Approach

This section of the report is structured around the main functions of the AAP process, as summarised in the logic model overleaf. It summarises the main headline findings on the role and operations of the current AAP function. It identifies areas of improvement that inform future sections of the report covering community development approach, funding, geographical structure and the resources required for delivery.

4.1 Inputs

4.1.1 Staffing Resource

A successful model of delivery requires staff with the appropriate capability and capacity. Our research has identified that the existing AAP staffing infrastructure provides a firm base. Wider stakeholders have praised the commitment, ability and attitude of staff. They understand the patch, the community and local infrastructure, and the opportunities. Each AAP has a Coordinator who is supported by Community Development Project Officers and Administative Support Staff. Key duties include:

- Arranging and minuting board meetings and Task and Finish Groups.
- Supporting organisations to complete funding applications, and to follow up progress.
- Managing the process of requests for support to internal DCC departments.
- Collecting monitoring information from funders.
- Managing lists of contacts and partners.
- Communications like newsletters, social media updates and annual reports.
- Board directed activities like directories of services.
- Support to County Councillors, including in some cases daily or weekly phone calls. Often this support related to facilitating the Neighbourhood Budget prioritisation.
- Organisational development support to new organisations.
- Acting as a link person or signposting to other DCC services.

The Towns & Villages Fund has boosted the number of staff operating across Durham. The staffing resource is utilised flexibly, targeting localities based on need. Whilst we have seen evidence of joint working and coordinated activity across AAP boundaries, there remains scope to deliver more of this.

Main Functions of AAP Process

Rationale	Local people and organisations are uniquely placed to understand the specific needs, assets and capabilities of their local area. The AAP is the mechanism for DCC, local communities and partner organisations to work together to tackle inequalities and deliver local change that is important to communities and makes a difference locally.

Inputs	AAP Staffing
	Funding
	Time and support from:
	  • The public
	  • Elected members
	  • Voluntary sector organisations
	  • Police
	  • Health (ICS)
	  • Fire and Rescue
	  • Housing
	  • DCC officers
	  • Community groups
	Local data ad performance info

Activities	Public communication, outreach and events Administering funding and funding support AAP Meetings AAP Forum Task and Finish/ Priority working groups Networking and local advice Councillor support

Outputs	Opportunities for a wide and inclusive range of residents to have their say, and have agency
	Identification of local needs, issues
	Identification of local assets
	  • Organisations
	  • Buildings
	  • Individuals
	  • Funding
	Development of local relationships
	Identification & facilitation of local solutions
	Funding Solutions

Outcomes	Changes to service provision by DCC, partners and local organisations. New projects coproduced or influenced by residents in partnership with local organisations, meeting local needs Increase volunteering and action by residents in local communities, for the benefit of individuals and communities
Impacts	Increased civic pride, partnership and leadership Improved community cohesion Increased access to services, activities and opportunities Improved services Increased equality and inclusion Improved health and wellbeing Increased public safety, and reduced offending Local economic development, increased jobs, and reduction in poverty

4.1.2 Funding

AAPs provide a governance model for agreeing, managing and monitoring funding across multiple streams. Figure 4.1 below summarises the overall scale of funding processed through AAPs alongside the number of transactions (projects). The scale of the work is significant, delivering much needed additional investment into communities across all corners of Durham. Appendix B provides further analysis of funding processed through AAPs.

Figure 4.1: AAP Funding Stream Value and Transactions

Fund Names	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	Total
Members Neighbourhood Budget	189	538	584	1091	609	583	326	672	1049	1224	1337	1405	1037	10644
Area Budget	236	204	264	403	465	457	513	420	451	259	346	555	205	4778
Holiday Activities with Food – DCC											47	184	181	412
Holiday Activities with Food – DFE													284	284
Youth Fund									63	63	50			176
Welfare Reform						29	24	21	23	32	18	1		148
Social Isolation Fund										46	45			91
Public Health						26	26							52
Consett Community Facilities										4	1	2	1	8
Members Towns & Villages Fund													8	8
Towns & Villages Fund													5	5
Total	**425**	**742**	**848**	**1494**	**1074**	**1095**	**889**	**1113**	**1586**	**1628**	**1844**	**2147**	**1721**	**16606**

The Area Budget was introduced as a key component at the commencement of AAPs. The scale of resource allocated has fluctuated year on year in response to allocation decisions by DCC. Area Budget funding is available for projects with a value of £5,000 or greater. Projects need to contribute to locality and county-wide priorities, meet a local need, and improve social, economic and environmental well-being.

The procedures specify that only non-profit organisations can receive funding. This includes:

● Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.

● Statutory bodies including DCC Services, Police, Fire and Health bodies.

● Parish and Town Councils.

● Schools and Colleges.

Area Budget projects are encouraged to secure match funding, both cash and 'in-kind' to maximise the benefits of the scheme. Funding allocated on an annual cycle and repeat funding for the same purpose year on year is monitored and discouraged.

County Councillors have responsibility for prioritising their Neighbourhood Budget. Neighbourhood Budget funding is available for projects with a value of £1,000 or greater. Each County Councillor can allocate up to £2,000 of their Neighbourhood Budget to a Neighbourhood Budget Small Grants (NBSG) for smaller projects of a value between £50 and £1,000. As with the Area Budget, the Neighbourhood Budget requires significant staff resource to manage, from supporting the development of ideas to final sign off and delivery.
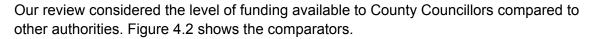
Our review considered the level of funding available to County Councillors compared to other authorities. Figure 4.2 shows the comparators.

Figure 4.2: Comparison of Councillor Budgets Across Local Authorities

Comparison of Councillor Budgets Across Local Authorities	
Local Authority	**Budgets**
Durham County Council	£19,400
Northumberland County Council	£15,000
Stockton Borough Council	£10,700
North Yorkshire County Council	£10,000
Kent County Council	£10,000
Devon County Council	£8,000
Suffolk County Council	£8,000
South Oxfordshire District Council	£5,000
Nottinghamshire County Council	£5,000
West Suffolk Council	£3,300
Malvern Hills District Council	£500
Shropshire Council	£0
Gloucester City Council	£0

The evidence is that DCC allocates a larger sum than all other areas. Our review also identified that the process for allocating funding is far more intensive than other areas.

One of the key priorities emerging from the research is the requirement to reduce the administrative burden associated with agreeing funding priorities. It is simply too resource intensive. Our approach has considered how processes can be streamlined, enabling more resource to be directed towards community development from the wider team.

About 30% of the Neighbourhood Budget projects go directly to DCC departments to deliver projects. Neighbourhood Budget projects make up around 60-70% of the transactions processed by the DCC Funding Team in any given year. There is an ongoing issue with the capacity of DCC staff in core services to deliver funded projects in a timely manner, leading to a degree of frustration by some County Councillors and wider partners. Whilst we understand this is due to capacity issues, any new model needs to be delivered in a way that enables improved planning of workload. A continuous stream of asks upon some DCC service areas, including Highways, makes this difficult at present.

Durham has advanced systems for scoping, appraising and agreeing priorities in relation to the Area Budget and the Neighbourhood Budget. The process provides assurances to minimise duplication and safeguard against accusations of misuse of public funds. The process is universal regardless of whether interventions are large projects from a first-time deliverer or a small project from a DCC service that has consistently delivered the same type of intervention on many occasions over a number of years. Whilst the robust process provides a high degree to scrutiny, it requires significant staff resource. It often takes too long to progress even small projects to delivery, when considering both pre-application support and the application process.

The Funding Team allocated significant time and energy to co-developing an online form with DCC's ICT team. Other options exist that would provide a more effective system for managing the process of agreeing and monitoring funding.

Our research has identified that the requirement to "use it or lose it" approach to allocating sizeable six-figure budgets at relatively short notice in some AAPs has reportedly led to a less considered approach to commissioning and reduced value for money. This needs to be considered in the design of the future model.

There is some evidence that in the largest AAPs, there is less prevalence in engaging and supporting small community and voluntary sector organisations. Instead, there is a reliance on larger organisations to coordinate or deliver on behalf of the AAP.

Emphasis is placed on match funding in reporting. This does not consider whether the AAP is the principal funder, so a contribution of £10,000 can be seen to attract £500,000 for a capital project. In monitoring the impact of any future funding, caution needs to be taken in assuming that this funding would not otherwise have been attracted into Durham.

Funding acts as an important mechanism to engage people in the processes and meetings of AAPs. It is also a key reason for some partners to engage. One of the most frequently referenced issues from some County Councillors has been a degree of dissatisfaction with the role of Public Members in decision making over funding. Whilst in some areas this is not an issue, in others it underpins a level of dissatisfaction that envelopes their wider view of the whole AAP approach. The issue stems from Public Members sometimes seeming to represent a party-political approach that influences the allocation of funding. A number of public representatives are also directly linked to an organisation that benefit from funding agreed via an AAP Board. Whilst systems are in place to manage conflicts of interest in the decision-making process, the perception remains that influence on the AAP Board provides an advantage to some organisations and in how funding is prioritised more generally.

Whilst we see some value of representation of public members on AAP Boards, greater value is achieved in Task & Finish Groups (and other meetings), where there is increased scope to be involved in sharing local intelligence and contributing to solutions. There is the potential to utilise public members to a much greater extent in the review of how funded projects are performing. This approach is undertaken in some AAPs but not in others.

Current budgets operate on an annual allocation cycle. This means that the process of appraising and agreeing priorities follows a frequent process of intensive repeated administration. The allocation of annual budgets tends to lead to less strategic interventions or a case where interventions expect to (and indeed do) secure funding across multiple years but have to 'jump through the necessary hoops' each year.

4.1.3   Partner Input

Where it works well, the AAP Boards have been largely successful in bringing partners from a diverse range of organisations together. Connections are made, networks are formed and conversations continue outside of AAP Board Meetings. It is important to retain this element of delivery.

Our research has identified that whilst the majority of AAPs operate as expected, a number continue to suffer from low involvement and attendance. Overall, public involvement on AAP Boards is consistent but is not regarded as sufficiently diverse to be considered truly representative of communities. Police and Fire services regard AAP Board meetings as key to their engagement activities and attendance is strong. We have seen some

excellent engagement from Housing, Health and Voluntary sector partners, but this was not consistent across all AAPs. Most areas struggled to engage business sector organisations. These partners do occasionally engage in Task & Finish Groups. It is important to ensure that the evolving structure explores the opportunities to involve such partners in the most appropriate way.

For young people especially, there is need to consider the role of incentives to generate engagement. Consideration should be given to boosting capacity across the team to support young people to engage in a meaningful way across the county.

The size of each AAP is so different that the experience of a being a Board Member, or of applying to be a Board Member varies. In smaller AAPs there is a reduced pool of public members willing to undertake the role, so terms are often extended. In larger areas not all County Councillors have the opportunity to be represented on the AAP Board.

4.1.4   Local Data and Performance Information Input

The priority is attached to community priorities rather than any objective use of data in determining the priority themes for each AAP each year.

Our research identified reference that the use of the Durham Insights portal and other quantitative data in developing local priorities is limited. There was limited evidence of systematic development of needs assessments or local insight which could be shared and acted upon. Aligning locality boundaries to data units e.g. lower level super output areas would be advantageous.

4.2   Activities

AAP staff are often a first point of contact or are signposted as a point of contact from wider stakeholders. Issues are discussed and questions get answered. It is important that this resource is retained in the future model. It is evident that much of AAP Coordinators and wider staff time is utilised providing support and assistance to County Councillors, albeit some much more than others.

There is greater scope for AAP staff to contribute to the development of policy and strategy led from County Hall at a much earlier stage. Their knowledge in relation to local community needs, opportunities, etc. seems under-utilised.

4.2.1   AAP Functions and Board Operation

Whilst the Terms of Reference provides the bedrock of AAP delivery, it is evident that within this framework some AAPs deliver differently. This includes the process for understanding community priorities via direct engagement; the process of funding calls (or not); retention of Board Members after terms expire; and the response to issues after Board Meetings i.e. sharing of summary actions and not waiting weeks for minutes, etc. There is a need for a consistent approach to be delivered.
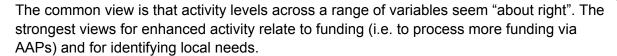
Our research gathered data on the effectiveness of current AAP functions via an e-survey that generated 267 responses. The proportion of respondents who stated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to particular statements about the impact of AAPs are summarised below.

- The AAP makes a positive difference in the community through delivering funding: 88%

- The AAP helps DCC and partners act at a very local level: 84%

- The AAP helps communities to speak up and ensure all voices are heard: 84%

- The AAP encourages local people be involved in shaping their communities: 82%

- The AAP supports people to take an active involvement in developing new ideas and projects: 82%

- The AAP helps partners to effectively combine their efforts in a local area: 80%

- The AAP helps identify local needs and understanding of what would make a difference in the AAP area: 79%

- The AAP recognise, celebrates and support the role and contribution of individuals in improving their communities: 77%

- The AAPs streamline and focus cross-public sector consultation with local people: 73%

- The AAP supports the impact of the County Durham Partnership and its thematic groups in achieving its priority outcomes: 66%

- The AAP makes a positive difference in the community by encouraging voluntary community action (unfunded): 63%

We understand that the majority of people responding to the survey were likely to be already engaged in the AAP structure. Some respondents will have benefitted from the AAP process in any number of ways and may therefore have an interest in their AAP continuing in its current form. For example, there was limited support for reducing many of the functions. Many respondents cited the need for more funding. There was support for increasing the activities of the AAP staff team, including delivering more grassroots community development. Figure 4.3 below provides insight from respondents on priorities looking forward.

Figure 4.3: Survey responses about AAP activity levels

Survey responses for AAP Activity Levels	We need much more %	We need more %	It's about right %	We should do less %	We should do much less %	Don't know %
Board Meetings	0.52	4.64	72.68	6.19	1.55	14.43
Task and Finish Groups	1.55	16.49	62.37	2.58	2.06	14.95
Forum	2.59	17.1	56.99	1.55	2.07	19.69
Identifying local needs	5.61	26.53	56.63	1.53	1.53	8.16
Reporting and communication	3.59	11.79	74.36	1.54	0.51	8.21
Funding	14.36	32.31	45.64	2.56	1.03	4.1
Consultation	7.67	20.51	62.56	1.54	1.03	6.67
Support to elected member	4.06	5.08	63.96	3.05	3.55	20.3
AAP Team activities	7.69	30.77	46.67	0.51	1.54	12.82

The common view is that activity levels across a range of variables seem "about right". The strongest views for enhanced activity relate to funding (i.e. to process more funding via AAPs) and for identifying local needs.

Whilst the overall findings are positive, there were some less positive responses made from 14 respondents, who responded negatively to every question. They tended to be County Councillors, 10 of whom were not active AAP members. These responses disproportionly represent a small number of AAPs. This reflects our wider understanding that some AAPs are regarded as operating less effectively for some partners than others.

AAP Board meetings are the principal mechanism for regular and frequent community engagement. These were observed to be formal meetings, expertly facilitated and minuted, with set agendas often including presentations of county wide updates or consultation, partner updates, and scrutiny of funding applications.

We observed the majority of AAP Board meetings. They were efficiently managed in progressing the business on the agenda. Contributions were generally well managed by the Chair, with priority of response given to Board Members, and more limited opportunities for input from community observers. Many funding applications presented at AAP Board meetings had previously been developed and/or scrutinised by Task and Finish Groups, which tended to be less formal and more collaborative.

The prescribed structure of Board Membership serves to limit new and different voices at each meeting. The Board Meetings are too formalised and too structured around agreeing small pots of funding. They are not typically an arena for in-depth debate on key issues due to the sheer volume of core business to be completed during each meeting.

In most AAPs there is openness and respect between staff, public representatives, statutory partners and County Councillors, regardless of party-political lines. In other areas, the AAP is less collaborative; engagement of statutory partners is low; there is distrust; decision making on funding priorities is often regarded as being driven by political allegiances of public representatives; and funding is allocated to organisations that either don't deliver and/or expect annual funding from Area Budget as matter of course.

Capacity for enhanced community engagement, community development and capacity building can only be achieved if current elements of the process are rationalised and the roles of delivery staff evolved. Streamlining the administration of funding pots is an obvious starting point.

4.2.2 Wider AAP Organisational Infrastructure

Behind the AAP Boards sits a number of processes and activities that underpin activity. This includes the AAP Forum, Task and Finish Groups and one to one support from AAP staff to stakeholders.

There is evidence that historically AAPs carried out a much wider range of community engagement activities and events, such as participatory budgeting, school events, open forums, outreach and engagement. Our research identified a willingness from staff to undertake more of this activity but their capacity to carry out more grass roots community engagement activity was curtailed by increased administration required to manage funding.

AAP Forums form a wider network of people who have previously engaged in an interaction focussed upon asking them what they think is important to them. It could be someone who engaged at a community event or who has responded to an online conversation. Since the

pandemic there has been limited work in engaging with the wider community in AAP related activity.

Our research has identified that the approach to Task and Finish Groups is largely successful in enabling space for genuine discussion on key issues that lead to service improvement. This is especially the case where groups are focussed on collaborative problem solving, rather than scrutinising funding applications.

AAP Forums and outreach events have historically attracted large numbers of people. It is important that any future mechanism is underpinned by space for all interested residents, County Councillors and wider stakeholders to discuss issues, ideas and solutions.

4.3   Outputs: Listen, Design, Connect, Facilitate

AAP Teams provide an area-based approach to delivery, facilitating some reach into communities. A local connection to DCC is highly valued. Community representatives engaged in our research highlighted that they are a mechanism to inform and influence delivery. For many, County Hall, literally and metaphorically, seems a long way away.

Our research has identified that AAP Teams understand their localities and communities. Low turnover of staff, combined with the relative longevity of the AAP approach has assisted in embedding knowledge. The AAP Team had a key role as part of the recent responses to hyper-local needs, such as the Covid pandemic and the post-Storm Arwen response.

AAP Boards can be a valuable mechanism for the sharing community intelligence. In observing AAP Boards we have seen examples of public representatives, County Councillors, DCC staff, wider partners and AAP staff demonstrating a deep-rooted understanding of the community infrastructure. It is important the any transition to a refreshed model of community engagement considers how those partners currently adding value are supported and encouraged to continue engaging.

Our research has identified some positive examples of local voluntary organisations working much more collaboratively as a result of AAP led activity. There remains scope to deliver more of this by releasing additional staff capacity from administrative roles related to funding. Whilst we know that some collaboration occurs through organic connections, further resourcing of community development staff to facilitate greater reach, including into rural communities where perhaps there is greater need due to a lack of wider services, should be a priority.

We have seen some good examples of AAPs coordinating activity that spans their boundary. There is scope for further joint working as at present there are too many piecemeal interventions funded that could be delivered much more efficiently across a larger area.

4.4   Outcomes and Impact

AAPs have been successful in facilitating new projects and providing funding to local organisations and communities, with more than 2,000 projects funding in 2021-22. Since the commencement of AAPs, funding has supported:

- 9,540 schemes supporting voluntary and community group activities.
- 3,914 supporting community buildings/facilities.
- 8,344 road safety initiatives.
- 1,820 schemes aimed at delivering a cleaner, more attractive, and sustainable environment.
- 619 schemes aimed at improving the quality of life, independence, care and support for people with long term conditions.

This has resulted in:

- 24,738 people engaged in voluntary work.
- 15,126 people benefitting from schemes that reduce the impact of welfare reform.
- 32,913 people benefitting from schemes to protect victims and vulnerable people from harm.
- 9,454 people undertaking training courses.
- 553 jobs being created.
- 61,597 people involved in initiatives aimed at improving mental health/ wellbeing.
- 160,343 children and young people benefitting from schemes to support them in achieving and maintaining optimal mental health and wellbeing.

Whilst at first glance these figures seem impressive, this is expected given the scale of the funding allocated since AAPs commenced. What is evident is that there remains a demand in localities for ongoing investment. There is still more to do. Whilst funding is part of the solution, there is a need to consider more innovative, locally driven solutions. A revised approach that prioritises resources upon community development and local capacity building should be part of this.

Whilst the process for appraising funding is sophisticated, there are less advanced systems for monitoring the outcomes and impact generated. Monitoring information is not systematically assessed and used for evaluation and learning, and evaluation skills and resources are limited. Information is collected from projects and is often (but not always) reported back to the AAP Board. Given the scale of interventions funded across Durham each year, it is simply not possible to understand the overall impact generated and any assessment of value for money.

Some AAPs arrange project visits via Board Champions to enhance understanding of projects. There is value in retaining this approach in any future model.

Our research has identified an overall lack of awareness of the role of AAPs and what they deliver by the majority of population of Durham. AAP staff teams do consider opportunities to publicise their AAP, but effectiveness varies. AAP good news stories are less likely to be included in the County Durham News than in previous years. Branding of AAP projects is

not widespread or consistent, and so positive impacts are not always attributed to the AAPs (and therefore DCC as funders of the function).

In some areas there is a deficit in local capacity and/or an expectation the AAP Teams will take the lead in delivering. Other voluntary and community sector organisations or volunteers could be better placed to lead, but there is a need to develop capacity for the community to take greater responsibility. In the context of ongoing funding pressures, it becomes even more important to use resources more effectively between partners, and support communities to develop their own capacity to make changes. An increased focus for the AAP Teams in developing community capacity would support this.

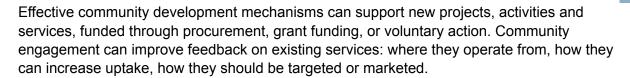# 5 Community Engagement, Community Development and Local Capacity Building

This section of the report outlines recommended changes to deliver improved community engagement, community development and enhance local capacity building.

5.1 The Case for Continued Investment

There is sound evidence that community development can facilitate sustained, positive change, individually and collectively and reducing demand on services. The Community Planning Toolkit[2] articulates the evidence and thinking behind community development in the below comparison between areas with and without community development functions.

Where there is No or Weak Community Development a locality often has these characteristics	Where there is Community Development a locality often has these characteristics
The most disadvantaged people receive poor quality services and are less able to articulate needs.	People are more confident and able to shape the quality of their lives.
Communities miss out on opportunities and are more excluded.	There is more involvement and positive citizenship.
People are unable to agree issues and priorities and to have these recognised by decision makers.	Communities and their leaders better understand wider issues and how to influence change.
Cultural differences are less likely to be respected.	There is a planned approach to tackling issues by communities and public bodies.
There is less volunteering and fewer skilled community groups.	Areas have a better image, can point to improvements in quality of life and are better able to attract economic investment.
Public bodies find it difficult to engage with people and communities.	Young people who gain qualifications and employment are more likely to stay and the area is more likely to attract employed people, thus increasing spending.
People who gain employment may move out thus reducing the pool of skills and spending in the area.	Communities take more responsibility for developing their own services, enterprises and social economies.
The area may have a poor reputation and fail to attract economic investment and opportunities.	People are more capable and supported to take advantage of economic and employment growth in the wider city.
People are less resilient and capable of benefiting from wider economic change.	

[2] communityplanningtoolkit.org from Big Lottery and Community Places

Effective community development mechanisms can support new projects, activities and services, funded through procurement, grant funding, or voluntary action. Community engagement can improve feedback on existing services: where they operate from, how they can increase uptake, how they should be targeted or marketed.

5.2   Principles of Successful Delivery

We explored the approach to community engagement nationally and internationally, reviewed the academic literature in this area, and considered what would be most relevant to consider for structuring the engagement mechanisms in Durham.

The challenges of community engagement

- Formal meeting structures are inaccessible and not a useful tool for ideas generation or collaboration, they are better for scrutiny but can become combative. Less formal participation activities drive better and wider participation.

- Participation is strongly correlated to income/wealth and education and political engagement – in other words members of the civic core tend to turn up. While these citizens may not always be representative of the local population as a whole, they tend to have multiple "hats", lots of experience and commitment, plus the time and ability to take action. However, it is important not to base understanding of local needs solely on the views of the civic core. Such people should be welcomed and engaged, alongside efforts to encourage and support others to also become involved.

- Good community engagement can lead to increased volunteering and more community groups, with communities taking more responsibility for developing their own solutions without services, but this generally needs to be supported and facilitated.

- People need to be supported and educated on key issues in order to make good decisions. Training and skills in community development or structural issues are needed to inform meaningful changes, for all participants.

- Politics - small P, and big P – and organisational structures are a major challenge and barrier in citizen led change. Organisational representatives should attempt to overcome political and structural conflict and boundaries to support communities to make a difference.

- Community members often care most immediately about physical issues in their local environment – play areas, dog litter etc.

- Identifying need in a way that creates actionable insight for health and social care is complex, and a developing practice. Data to inform and underpin this needs to be provided by "anchor institutions" like local authorities and health partners.

- Online tools and time limited engagement are useful in widening participation.

- Engagement with young people is often most successful through schools or youth activities.

- Paid worker support in the community is key to building and maintaining networks and helping to facilitate change.

- Community development generally requires the availability of "seed funding" or small pots of project funding, with minimal barriers to access.

- Community Centres are key to facilitating local solutions and involving local people. Co-location of staff in community locations is a good way to make community links to both residents and local paid workers.

- Many community groups or local agencies are hampered by a lack of access to resources that can be provided easily and cheaply by larger partners to support collaborative innovation. These can be called 'slack resources' and include things like collaborative spaces; facilitation of 'serendipitous' meetings between local actors; capability and capacity for evaluation and communication of failures and successes. If these resources are provided by local authorities and staff, other community development activities can be maximised.

5.3   Resourcing Community Development

We recommend significant changes to how the functions of AAPs are delivered. We recommend that a team of Senior Community Coordinators, Community Coordinators and Community Development Workers are resourced to deliver a new wave of community engagement, community development and community capacity building.

The current AAP model provides a role for members of the public to take an active role in determining how the Area Budget and other funding streams are prioritised. Our recommendation is to remove this function. The public role instead will become one of engaging in meaningful discussion about what needs to improve in their area and informing how this is best delivered in partnership with other organisations. With additional frontline resource, this open community engagement, working alongside residents should lead to more informed solutions, some of which may require funding (but many won't).

We recommend that the revised community development function prioritises:

- Supporting residents and VCS organisations with one to one support.

- Taking a lead role in enabling networks and collaboration across voluntary and community sector (VCS) and wider partner within and beyond the locality.

- Assisting local people to develop the capability to start operating new projects and initiatives in response to known local needs.

- Supporting organisations secure project funding for the first time. Assist in developing individual/organisational systems and resilience.

- Identifying gaps in local VCS provision and commence a process of 'grow your own' to respond to need.

- Supporting the development of local intelligence on priorities and needs, either at a community or county level.

- Providing a visible and trusted presence in communities, including often under-represented communities and remote villages and settlements.

- Enabling a degree of insight beyond the existing level i.e. to recognise the hidden issues that exist.

- Able to react quickly to emerging needs.

- Managing a small community chest to stimulate community engagement.

- Producing a directory of community buildings, contact details and timetable of activities, etc.

- Delivering community engagement to inform strategic priorities.

- Working closely with all County Councillors to share insights.

- Developing a culture of partnership, including bridging the gap between party-political differences.

It is important that staff time is not overly diluted by involvement in planning and managing funding streams. The current administrative burden on staff needs to be reduced to free up more time for grass root community development work.

We recommend a clear refresh of brand to reflect new focus. This should involve the change of the name of AAPs to Community Networks. We also recommend that the Area Budget is modified and retitled Strategic Grants. Further detail is included in Section 6.

We recommend the cessations of AAP Board meetings to be replaced by regular (perhaps bi-monthly) Community Network meetings that focus on a rotating theme. The themes would link to need and the County Durham Partnership subgroups (Youth, Community Safety, Economic Development, etc).

Meetings would be open access, with no 'top table' of selected Board Members. County Councillors should be encouraged to attend. The Community Network meetings would be chaired by Senior Community Coordinators/ Community Coordinators. Formal minuting of meetings should be reduced to minuting actions only, and for meetings this responsibility could and should be with wider partners to undertake.

The Community Network meetings should not be the only engagement point. More varied, flexible engagement methods should be adopted as routine, including the best functions of existing Task and Finish Groups and AAP Forums, with a range of other options including one to one meetings, networking events, and other small group meetings. This flexible method should enable enhanced working with other partners based on community issues e.g. Parish and Town Councils.

Greater collaboration with local partners could facilitate coordinated responses across a number of areas including the prepatation of:

- Newsletters and communications.

- Directories of services and activities (potentially utilising Durham Families Information Service Directory).

- Databases of community members and partners or training and skills opportunities.

Appendix A provides a list of engagement activities which have been successful elsewhere and should be used in designing detailed approaches in each Community Network.

New success metrics should be developed that emphasise engagement and partnership working.

Engagement with young people is often most successful through schools or youth activities. We recommend dedicated resource to enhancing young people's engagement in each Community Network.

5.4   Delivering from Local Bases

We recommend that Community Network Teams be based in community centres, libraries, warm spaces, family hubs etc. Co-location can give benefits in access to communities and tacit knowledge of other staff. These community spaces present opportunities for AAP staff to increase their visibility.

6   Funding

This section of the report outlines the options and recommendations for prioritising and managing funding area-based structures.

6.1   Introduction

DCC funding to AAPs via the Area Budget and Neighbourhood Budget has enabled a diverse range of important projects to be funded. We recognise that DCC has to find savings in the setting of its budget for 2023/24, and that this may impact what, and at what scale, funding packages continue for future AAP-type structures. The cessation or significant reduction in budgets will have an impact upon local organisations, local delivery of services and outcomes on local people.

6.2   Reducing the Administrative Burden

There is a requirement to reduce the administration associated with funding processed through locality structures. We recommend streamlining current forms and monitoring processes for all applications. This will enable resources from within the team to be directed towards frontline community development. It will also release capacity from project leads, including DCC Officers across departments.

We also recommend the implementation of a specialist external ICT system to manage online applications. Our research has identified alternatives to the current funding administration system. These are summarised below.

Figure 6.1: Delivery options for funding

Delivery options for funding
Durham County Council in-house funding team • **5p per £1** last year, varies from 4p to 11p. Cost is £280k for funding team • Appraisal only • Excluding Town and Villages, who have their own funding officers for an additional £4m. With them, 8p per £1 last year
Community Foundation • Up to **10p per £1**, cost would be between £350k and £1m pa, £373k last year without Neighbourhood budget • Includes decision making facilitation and appraisal, facilitated independently • Connected to local charities and other funds. Not likely to be able to support Neighbourhood Budgets or link to DCC departments
Durham County Council with funding software • Specialist funding software, online forms, reporting, contracts, monitoring. Should provide efficiencies • Appraisal only • **Additional 0.5p per £1** in Y1, and **0.2p** for subsequent years. Approx 14k pa, plus £20-25k set up costs.
NEPO and Bloom • Cost to supplier of 5% • Appraisal only • Technically some differences between grant funding and procurement. Not likely to be able to support Neighbourhood Budgets or link to DCC departments. Bureaucratic and difficult for small organisations

The progression with such a model is related to the level of funding expected to flow via Community Networks.

New approaches to support delivery of capital projects should be implemented that minimise the requirement for Senior/Community Coordinators to develop. This responsibility should be with staff from the Funding Team directly, albeit with some input from Community Coordinators where this would support targeting of support, etc.

6.3   Area Budget and Strategic Grants

We recommend that the Area Budget should transition to a new Strategic Grant programme, adopting a more strategic approach to allocating the funding based on a four-year funding cycle tied to the electoral cycle. This approach would have a number of benefits:

- Enabling a window for comprehensive community engagement to determine a clear strategic approach to funding priorities during the first 12 months of the electoral cycle.

- Reduce the bureaucracy with partners bidding on an annual cycle for the same projects.

- Reduce the resource required to appraise and approve projects, releasing staff to focus more time on genuine community development.

- Provide greater certainty, increasing opportunities for match funding and for retaining staff on three-year rather than 12-month contracts.

- Improve opportunities to increase match funding from external sources that otherwise would not be secured, bringing additional investment into County Durham.

- Enable interventions to be coordinated across multiple Community Network areas.

- Provide organisations three years to develop a plan for sustainability post Strategic Grant funding.

- Provide clarity to organisations that continued funding for the same intervention across four-year cycles would not be allowed.

The Senior/Community Coordinators would co-produce their programme with the community and partners, sharing ideas at Community Network meetings and with involvement of County Councillors. We recommend that formal approval of funding should be through a sub-group established by the County Durham Partnership. Such an approach would be transparent, separating decision making from the project development phase. There is scope to design a process that is evidence-based, objective and based on criteria agreed by DCC (as the funder),

The transition to the four-year funding cycle would commence in May 2025. If the recommendation is agreed, then consideration needs to be given to the transiton between 2023/24 and 2024/25. If the funding level is retained in the DCC budget, then there is the opportunity to utilise funding to focus on tackling the cost of living crisis.

The Area Budget amount is standard across each AAP, regardless of the population served. This means that the smallest AAP gains much more funding per head of population than the largest AAP. Should the Strategic Grants process be adopted, it is recommended that each locality receives a base level of funding with an uplift allocated on a population size basis. There is potential to factor other variables into the funding model, including the level of disadvantage and the existing VCS infrastructure that is able to draw wider funding into the area.

6.4   Neighbourhood Budget

At present, Neighbourhood Budgets have to be approved using the same intensive process as the Area Budget. Our recommendations are that:

- A light touch approach to appraisal and approval is adopted, reducing the administrative requirements. Such an approach will enable projects to be designed and commenced within a shorter timescale than at present. It reduces the administrative burden on project proposers, including DCC staff that typically account for a third of the overall Neighbourhood Budget projects each year.

- County Councillors are not required to report the use of their Neighbourhood Budget back to the Community Network.

- County Councillors are encouraged to attend their Community Network, participate in discussions and use insights to inform prioritisation of their Neighbourhood Budget.

- County Councillors can use their Neighbourhood Budget to boost activity funded via the Strategic Grant i.e. fund an additional youth worker for their ward/group of wards with agreement of other County Councillors.

- County Councillors have a dedicated contact within the Funding Team to support the planning and delivery of interventions funded via their Neighbourhood Budget.

- A brochure of regular capital items be developed i.e. bins, 20mph zone etc. to inform County Councillors of the approximate costs of interventions.

One option identified through the consultation was to increase the level of the Neighbourhood Budget allocated to each County Councillor funded by the cessation of Area Budgets. This has some advantages, including ensuring that funding is equally distributed across the county and enabling higher value schemes to be funded.

Such an approach does present challenges. One issue of the current system is the capacity within DCC to progress so many projects within a timescale deemed acceptable to County Councillors and wider stakeholders. Even with a streamlined system for allocating funding, increasing the Neighbourhood Budget without additional capacity within DCC departments to support the design, costing and delivery of projects will lead to even further delays in delivery.

6.5   Community Economic Development

A number of AAPs currently fund a range of employability support programmes. We see the value of these on a local level. There is a dislocation between the priority attached to economic development activity, as AAPs tend to undervalue this compared to the corporate priority of DCC. The cessation of funding from European Structural Investment Funds, the transition to UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the emerging possibility of a devolution deal

for Durham mean that resourcing from 2023 is uncertain. There is scope for a structured approach to resourcing economic development interventions by ring-fencing the Strategic Grant. Coordinating activity can present opportunities for economies of scale whilst reducing the risk of duplication.

The Levelling Up White Paper also sets out a new devolution framework for England and this presents an opportunity for Durham. There is a role for locality-based structures to contribute to localised insight and localised delivery.

6.6   Wider Funding

The AAP structure is a vital mechanism for delivering targeted programmes to communities. We recommend that the Community Network is used to inform priorities but that decisions are taken by Senior/Community Coordinators.

We recommend that Community Development Workers have access to a discretionary Community Chest to support new and/or small scale activity in their area. We propose a £300 limit for new organisations that have been operating for less than three years or that have annual turnover of less than £1,000. There should be a light-touch approval process to remove barriers to access for people who may have not previously accessed funding. The process cannot be a barrier to engagement.

7   Managing Delivery

This section of the report summarises the options for locality-based delivery across the county. It outlines recommendations for structuring geographical arrangements for delivery and the resource required to underpin the recommended model.

7.1   Locality Delivery

The recommended evolution of AAPs to Community Networks underpinned by community development. The starting point for determining boundaries of Community Networks needs to be informed by the ideal footprint for coverage of Senior/Community Coordinators, Community Development Workers, support staff and Funding Officers. Based on our understanding of existing delivery and from experience elsewhere, we would recommend an effective system can be delivered on the basis of 14-18 evenly sized (by population) geographical units of delivery across Durham.

Taking the existing AAP structure as a starting point, this could be delivered by retaining the existing AAP operational boundaries with the exception of splitting the East Durham AAP into two (or even three) separate units. There could be scope under this option for Weardale and Teesdale to share a Senior/Community Coordinator.

The second option would be for Community Network boundaries to align with the new electoral ward boundaries due to come into effect in 2025. With the reduction of County Councillors from 126 to 98, this could lend itself to structuring localities on the basis of seven areas each with 14 County Councillors (and their associated Neighbourhood Budgets). If DCC decide to increase the value of Neighbourhood Budgets then this option makes more sense. One concern is that electoral ward boundaries do not always reflect natural communities. Some flexibility may be required in the number of clusters to ensure the best fit.

The third option would be for Community Networks to align with PCN boundaries (shown overleaf). Alignment of coterminous boundaries presents opportunities. There is considerable overlap between the 'wider determinants of health' agenda in the Health and Care Bill and the requirement from PCN/ICB to resource community development activity. Aligning resources will present efficiencies in staffing and data analysis functionality.

There is some evidence that health is unevenly represented on existing AAP Boards, so closer alignment of operational boundaries would encourage joint working. Budgets for commissioning are linked to PCN boundaries, so in principle Community Networks can provide intelligence to inform resource decisions.

The Derwentside PCN is large, so we would propose splitting this into two. This arrangement would lead to 14 Community Networks. It is recommended that further analysis is undertaken of the PCN option, to consider the potential to amend boundaries to better align with new ward boundaries. PCN borders are approximate, so can be flexible to consultation, natural settlements and alignment with other boundaries.

There is a risk that any change to boundaries would disrupt the level of local knowledge, networks and partnerships that have been established over time, and are essential to the functioning of the AAPs. However, this risk is mitigated if staff are retained.

There is a secondary risk that health boundaries may evolve further. It is expected that a period of transition will be required to any evolving model, so this can be monitored during 2023.

7.2   Resourcing and Managing Delivery

We have considered how the Community Networks could be resourced on the basis of the existing staffing levels across the AAP service. However, this does need to respond to the implementation (or not) of the recommendations made in this report.

We recommend that the management and staffing structure should include: an overall Senior Manager to lead the Community Networks and oversee Strategic Grant funding; and a Senior Community Coordinator or Community Coordinator (current AAP Coordinator-type role) and a minimum of one Community Development Worker for each Community Network.

It is recommended that the 14 Community Networks are packaged into larger clusters, each with a Senior Community Coordinator to oversee strategic delivery. These seven operational clusters of Community Networks would each have an administration and funding officer to support delivery of Neighbourhood Budgets and Strategic Grants (if agreed). In summary, this would require seven Senior Community Coordinators and seven Community Coordinators.

Each Senior Community Coordinator would specialise in a thematic area aligned to County Durham Partnership priorities, with responsibility to coordinate and share knowledge within Community Networks and acting as a conduit to wider partners e.g. DCC Economic Development Team, Business Durham, etc.

Changes to how current funding is managed will impact upon the role of the Funding Team. We recommend that the Funding Team are the main resource to support County Councillors with their Neighbourhood Budget. There is a requirement that the Funding Team develop an understanding of the key issues across their clusters and we expect that Senior/Community Coordinators would have some role in assisting project development.

We also recommend staffing resource be allocated towards:

- Evaluating the impact of the investment with a consistent set of tools.

- Marketing and publicity to drive up community knowledge of how to engage with Community Networks and publicise achievements.

- Supporting young people to engage. We recommend separate roles including Data and Insight and Evaluation Lead; Marketing Lead, Youth Lead, Training and improvement lead.

County Durham CCG - GP Practice Primary Care Networks

necs

Primary Care Network (PCN) borders within the CCG are arbitrary, and have been produced to show the approximate areas covered by each PCN. They should not be used as actual borders to determine PCN areas or be used to directly influence any decision making. Populations for each GP Practice have been summarised for each PCN and are published via NHS Digital, they are correct as of 1st January 2020.

Primary Care Networks

- Chester-le-Street (56,719)
- Claypath (34,886)
- Dales 1 (29,867)
- Bishop Auckland PCN (37,977)
- Teesdale PCN (24,358)
- Derwentside (94,063)
- Durham East (27,337)
- Durham West (51,496)
- Easington Central (33,533)
- Easington District (32,417)
- North Easington (37,185)
- Sedgefield 1 (41,983)
- Sedgefield North (56,462)

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Appendix A: Creative Methods of Community Engagement

Traditionally, **public meetings** are often taken as the standard practice within community engagement activity[3]. These approaches often adopt a formalised and structured format with pre-determined agendas or discussion topics, which can be beneficial in gathering together large numbers of people to share information and gather feedback. However, there are also disadvantages to using public meetings. Attendance at these more structured meetings is likely to be higher for issues which are particularly controversial and where more people feel concerned or angry, which might limit the usefulness of the information that can be gathered. Similarly, attendance at public meetings is unlikely to be representative of a whole community, as some people are more inclined and able to attend than others. However, several alternative and innovative models have emerged. These creative and alternative approaches may be used in isolation or in combination with public meetings and other traditional approaches.

Visioning is an activity which might be beneficial for identifying common ground, establishing consensus, and generating some ideals for informing future strategy. However, these activities are best suited for use with participants with a high level of knowledge and skills in engagement and interaction, such as policymakers, local electives and other strategic partners. They may be less accessible to wider communities. They are also not well-suited to discussing topics which are highly contested, as they rely on some common ground from which to establish a strategic plan and action plan.

The **Open House** approach involves a more flexible public gathering, where project information is displayed for participants to engage with and view at their own pace, in combination with the presence of the project team to answer questions and respond to feedback[3]. The flexibility of this approach, which does not involve a formalised presentation, is useful for widening the scope of engagement to include a broader demographic e.g. families or parents with young children who might otherwise be unable to sit quietly through a formal presentation. These events are also often held over days or weekends, meaning that participants are free to engage and attend when they are able. It is crucial to consider the accessibility and neutrality of the venue, as well as the availability of a selection of the project team to engage face-to-face with the public.

Similarly, the **Open Space Technology**[4] model adopts a more open-ended structure in comparison to public meetings. These events are typically held over 1-3 days and follows a logical, but flexible, process comprising of several stages of activity. These activities begin with an informal 'opening circle' led by a facilitator to introduce the key issues, followed by agenda-setting amongst all participants. Participants then choose from the parallel workshops they wish to attend and move between workshops to discuss the issues. Discussions and comments are recorded, and the event is rounded off with a feedback session to report on issues raised during discussions. Following the event, all feedback comments are collated into a report format to be distributed to participants. This model is particularly suited to exploring complex topics with the potential for high levels of conflict, whilst engaging a diverse range of individuals. The format is useful for introducing people to new ideas and perspectives and removing traditional 'us and them' barriers to engagement.

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[3] Hinge Collective (n.d.) Alternatives to Public Meetings. https://hinge-collective.com/s/5AlternativestoPublicMeetings-FINAL.pdf

[4] Involve.org.uk. https://involve.org.uk/resources/methods/open-space-technology

The agenda is set and moulded by participants as the event develops, leading to a 'self-organizing' format. However, participants are self-selecting and this format is unlikely to attract new people beyond those already likely to attend traditional meetings. The 'one-off' nature of such events may also make it difficult for some people to participate due to scheduling clashes.

Another creative method for engaging members of the community is the Block Party model[3]. This is a one-off outdoor neighbourhood event to generate interest in or celebrate a neighbourhood project or cause. The approach often draws upon community organizing, involving local residents in designing and organising the event, to increase reach and build excitement in the community whilst offering a welcoming and friendly environment. The events are designed to be enjoyable and informal, making them useful tools for community consultation in areas with high levels of 'consultation fatigue' or for engaging demographics who may be thought of as 'hard to reach' using more traditional methods of consultation, such as teenagers or children. The method can also be useful in building upon existing community connectedness by bringing together sub-groups of the local community who may not otherwise interact with each other, such as students (a transient population) and community members[5], and by empowering local businesses, traders, artists and musicians to become involved in the event delivery.

Workshops and Focus Groups allow for smaller, in-depth discussions on a focussed topic, and can be targeted towards certain demographics including typically excluded communities or 'hard to reach' groups[6]. In communities where there is no clear central or accessible venue for all communities, where there are hard-to-reach groups, or where multiple languages are spoken, **Small Workshops** may be a useful tool for delivering community engagement[3]. This involves a series of small, focussed meetings or discussions which take place across several locations in the community, and which are led by partner organisations who are recognised and trusted by members of the community. This method requires experienced facilitators to ensure that all voices are heard, not just those individuals who are particularly outspoken. To ensure that all members of the community are given an opportunity to have their say, and not just those who are already involved with a specific partner organisation, these workshops may be combined with other approaches.

Forums or **Citizens' Panels** may involve similar activities to workshops and focus groups but involving a more regular format and with repeat attendees comprising of the same group. Forums may be beneficial in maintaining momentum and enthusiasm and can be used to engage 'hard to reach' groups where focussed upon a specific concern or priority. This can then form the basis of broader engagement as the themes and activities develop. However, group membership can be a challenge, as attendance may be limited to a small group of proactive or enthusiastic citizens at the expense of broader engagement. There is the potential for such forums to become rule-bound and bureaucratic and structured like more traditional public meetings. Conversely, there may also be an overemphasis on discussion, consensus building and deliberation over action.

Tabling is another creative approach for raising awareness of and consulting residents on a community project or issue. This method involves the installation of a table or exhibit at

[5] Wilsey, Whelpley & Welty (2017) Community Engagement in a Former Steel Town: The Role of a Living-Learning Community. https://encompass.eku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1111&context=prism

[6] Community Places (XXXX) Community Planning Toolkit: Community Engagement. https://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/community-engagement

an everyday location where large numbers of people likely to hold some stake in the project would already gather, such as a local park, transport hub, or community event[3]. The exhibit is typically staffed by community partners or team members who are knowledgeable about the project and able to answer questions and hold in-depth discussions with interested residents. The exhibit may include incentives to take part, such as a raffle or prize draw, or creative spaces for children and young people to participate through drawing, model building, or idea generating. This approach is beneficial for increasing reach with a diverse range of people who may not otherwise know about the project or where there may be a lack of community partners able to assist with delivering events and activities. This approach also enables residents to engage with the consultation at a level they deem appropriate, whether that is simply learning about the project, leaving a comment or feedback, or having an in-depth discussion with staff. This method can be combined with activities such as **community mapping** (see for instance the use of 'actor mapping' by Sport England in the You've Got This South Tees Local Delivery Pilot, where residents and stakeholders were invited to explore community priorities and issues[7]).

Another interactive approach is the Walkshop; this involves a public meeting which is held on a walking tour in the local neighbourhood[3]. This uses the neighbourhood landscape as a prompt for conversation and is particularly useful for consulting on issues of neighbourhood planning or community assets, or where there are complex issues which can be more easily understood with a visit. This method is beneficial in positioning community members as experts in their own neighbourhood. The visibility of this method in the local community also may draw in additional interest and attendance beyond those originally intending to engage, through striking up conversations during the walk. This method requires a skilled facilitator and representative who is knowledgeable about the location(s) of interest.

Methods of engagement involving **art and creative activities** might also be particularly beneficial for generating interest in projects and ideas and encouraging participation amongst a wider range of stakeholders including children and young people[6]. These activities might take place in combination with other methods and events outlined above and may include participant-led photography where individuals are given disposable cameras alongside a prompt such as "what do you like most about your area?", or competitions where people are invited to submit artwork, poems or written plans outlining their ideas.

Several methods also adopt the use of **virtual technologies** including digital platforms and web-based methods of engagement. However, there are also opportunities to harness existing web-based platforms based upon geographic proximity, such as the NextDoor app, although such methods raise additional considerations of digital exclusion and digital literacy.

There are also a range of **toolkits** designed to support policymakers to develop meaningful and relevant community engagement activities. For example, VOiCE (Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement) is an IT-based tool designed by the Scottish Government to support the implementation of the National Standards for Community Engagement; the toolkit can be used to plan, develop and evaluate community engagement activities.

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[7] Sport England (2021) Understanding the system you are trying to shape.
https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-10/Putting%20it%20
into%20practice%20-%20understanding%20the%20system%20you%27re%20trying%20to%20shape.
pdf?VersionId=y4QRROd19YWZkBRMiiZhW7K.0gnigZ1o

Appendix B: Analysis of Funding Linked to AAP

We have done some analysis of spend for the past three full financial years. Because of their relatively small size, the NBSGs accounted for 41% of the payments and transactions from the funding team.

Figure 1: Area Budget and Neighbourhood Budget Allocations by Theme

Theme	Area Budget (£)	Neighbourhood Budget
Covid-19/Covid-19 Recovery	£2.13m	£0.26m
Wealthier…	£0.81m	£1.30m
Children and Young People	£0.85m	£1.18m
Connecting Communities	£1.54m	£0.32m
Safer	£0.11m	£1.46m
Long and Independent Lives	£1.13m	£156k
Healthier	£0.65m	£0.39m
Greener	£0.13m	£0.42m
NBSG	£0	£0.51m
More and Better Jobs	£0.44m	£22k
An Excellent Council	£0	£0

COVID-19 and COVID Recovery had an additional allocation in 2020/21 and 2021/22. The Safer priority theme includes highways changes like 20mph zones, dropped kerbs and CCTV, which is more likely to be funded via Neighbourhood Budget. Environmental projects, such as parks and green spaces are also more likely to be funded via Neighbourhood Budget.

Figure 2: Average Size of Project by Funding Stream

Average Size of Project by Funding Stream	
Towns & Villages Fund	£26,613.20
Consett Community Facilities	£17,531.43
Members Towns & Villages Fund	£10,775.62
Social Isolation Fund	£7,584.47
Welfare Reform	£6,357.16
Area Budget	£5,353.32
Holiday Activities with Food - DCC	£1,079.74
Holiday Activities with food - DFE	£2,676.26
Youth Fund	£2211.65
Neighbourhood Budget Small Grants	£246.10
Members Neighbourhood Budget	£1566.48

In 2021/22, The Neighbourhood Budget was 25% of the total funding but accounted for 60% of total transactions. Holiday activities - Fun and Food also had significantly more transactions than the Area Budget.

Figure 3: Funding Amounts vs size of transactions

Funding Amounts vs size of transactions	2021/22 Fund Amounts £ (%)	2021/22 Fund Transactions (%)
Area Budget	52.20%	11.91%
Neighbourhood Budget	25.41%	60.26%
Holiday Activities with Food – DFE	13.76%	16.50%
Holiday Activities with Food – DCC	3.91%	10.52%
Others	4.71%	0.81%

Figure 4: Number of recipients and transactions by area

Transactions 2019/20 to 2021/22 excluding Neighbourhood Budget			
AAP	Number of Recipients	Funds Paid	Transactions
Mid Durham	66	£334,427.04	116
Durham City	64	£364,419.03	113
Derwent Valley	47	£359,708.50	70
East Durham	41	£360,112.00	95
Weardale	41	£314,913.23	93
3 Towns	39	£366,704.51	85
BASH	39	£409,589.54	74
GAMP	38	£334,977.41	67
Teesdale	36	£359,926.79	76
Chester-le-Street	35	£362,196.92	83
EDRC	33	£394,687.28	94
Spennymoor	33	£346,913.71	68
Stanley	28	£312,792.15	64
4 Together	24	£401,691.02	72
Cross County and other	17	£351,306.02	25
Total	**458**	**£5,374,365.15**	**1195**

Figure 5: Comparison of AAP Area Demographics and Spend 18/19

AAP Area	Population	IMD2019 % Population in the top 10%	Spend 18/19	Per capita 18/19
East Durham	93686	23%	£317,903	£ 3.39
Durham City	73681	4%	£300,656	£ 4.08
Chester-le-Street	54758	3%	£209,260	£ 3.82
Derwent Valley	47375	0%	£254,875	£ 5.38
BASH	43005	26%	£216,119	£ 5.03
Mid-Durham	34597	5%	£184,215	£ 5.32
Stanley	33680	8%	£211,943	£ 6.29
GAMP	26967	21%	£186,412	£ 6.91
East Durham Rural	25669	0%	£220,855	£ 8.60
3 Towns	25626	17%	£174,355	£ 6.80
Teesdale	25279	0%	£190,309	£ 7.53
Spennymoor	23306	13%	£172,489	£ 7.40
4 Together	17540	7%	£209,030	£ 11.92
Weardale	7980	0%	£147,306	£ 18.46
Grand Total	**533149**		**£3,059,657**	**£ 5.74**

Figure 6 shows how the process of funding support through AAPs differs from a traditional funder.

Figure 6: Funding Process

Current Steps to develop a project to the point of funding

The steps taken in support are variable, depending on capital or revenue, fund, value, applicant and area

Scrutiny

Coproduction

Community Development

| Identifying need | Generating Ideas for local action | Identify + Support community orgs to be able to deliver | Costing solutions | Developing Application | Scrutiny and agreement in Principal (T&F, Board) | Appraising suitability of organisation | Appraising Suitability of Project | Awarding Funding | Initiating Project | Monitoring |

Challenging and time consuming to consult on local need and develop local action.

Some AAPs step in here as local VCSEs reduced

Challenges in capacity in DCC

Both online and paper process are not easy

As funding increases and capacity reduces, more board and partner time focussed here

Sometimes correct and support instead of refuse

Facilitation of landlord permissions, tests etc happen here

Funding Team

AAP, Partners, Community, Staff and funded org