

DERWENT VALLEY PARTNERSHIP (DVP) BOARD MEETING MINUTES

29 March 2023, Salvation Army Hall, Consett at 6pm



Present:

Elected Representatives

Cllrs Veronica Andrews, Kevin Earley, Kathryn Rooney, and Alex Watson.

Partner Organisations

Mark Clelland (Chair) (Derwentside Trust), Allan Hobson (Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS)), Alison Lazazzera (Durham County Council (DCC)), Acting Sgt Fiona Maddick (Durham Constabulary), Philip Pollard (Karbon Homes) and Rachel Rooney (Integrated Care Board).

Public Representatives

Lea McConnell. Helen Marley and Susan Mellor (Vice Chair).

DVP:

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

Presentation: County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority on the Community Risk Management Plan 2023-26

Members of the Public: 12

Apologies:

Elected Reps: Cllrs Stephen Robinson (Vice Chair), Alan Shield and Michelle Walton. Public Rep: Linda Acres.

1. Meeting opened by the Chair

Mark Clelland welcomed everyone to the meeting and a warm welcome was extended to our new Fire rep Allan Hobson and to Police rep Fiona Maddick (both gave a short introduction about themselves).

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

Rachel Rooney announced that this will be her last meeting as she has a new job and said there will be someone else to replace her who will attend as the Health rep.

2. Minutes of Previous Board Meeting (25 January 2023)

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

3. County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

Allan Hobson, Fire Safety Officer, gave a presentation on the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2023-26 and consultation

Allan gave an overview about the Fire Service, their achievements and their performance. He also briefly explained about the CRMP which is a 3 year plan that looks at all the risks the service faces, contains community profile information and sets out the Service's plans to address those risks. The plan is reviewed every year to make sure it contains up to date risk information (a copy of the presentation is available upon request).

The public are being asked to have their say, which helps the service to decide where and how to use their resources, and are being asked for their agreement/views on the following questions:

1. They propose to crew all of their wholetime fire engines with four firefighters.
2. They propose to review the Risk Based Inspection Programme for business premises to ensure their proactive protection and enforcement activities are aligned to identified risks, to maintain the reduction of non-domestic fires and ensure the continued safety, from fire, of employees and visitors to these premises.
3. Do you have any overall comments about the CRMP and approach to allocating resources?

A copy of the full CRMP is available on their website at www.ddfire.gov.uk/service-plans.

The consultation closes on 11 May 2023.

Hard copy forms were given out to Forum members and collected at the end of the meeting. An online survey is available at <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/CRMP23-24/>.

A question was raised regarding a power surge to street lampposts which could have been a potential fire risk and wondered if this is an issue and happens elsewhere. Allan says it is an issue and it occasionally happens in rural areas where a surge in electricity can generate a fire. They work closely with utility companies to try and identify what the issues are.

Concerns were raised about empty properties and the danger of fires. Allan said they have a risk register that identifies as many empty properties as possible as they are aware they can be a target for arson.

Mark thanked Allan for the presentation which he said was very informative and gave a good insight into what goes on within the fire service.

4. Task Group Updates

Fiona gave an update on the work of the 4 Task Groups, which Board members had received a copy of the information prior to the meeting.

Environment Task Group

Due to a delay in finalising the action plan, the call out for projects linked to the Environment Task Group has been slightly later than the rest of the DVP's task groups.

The closing date for project proposals via the call out was 30 January 2023 and the task group received 3 completed applications with a total funding request of £63,667. As the total budget available was £37,521, we were oversubscribed by £26,146.

Task group members received copies of the funding applications to review and questions raised were sent to the applicants. The responses were received prior to the applicants being invited to attend a task group meeting on 1 March to present their projects and answer any additional questions.

Following the presentations the task group discussed the projects at length and based on their discussions, they would like to recommend the following to the Board.

One project proposal from Groundwork North East and Cumbria - Revitalising Caribees Woodland with a funding request of £19,485 was not recommended to the Board for funding.

The following 2 projects were recommended to the Board for funding:

1. **Random's Retreat**, Rewilding Together. Funding request of £7,200 (£1,940 match funding secured).

A community rewilding project designed to encourage natural habitats for wildlife on Random's Retreat's site at Medomsley.

There were no comments raised and the Board APPROVED to fund Random's Retreat £7,200 from the 2022/23 Area Budget.

2. **OASES**, Derwent Valley Climate Friendly Schools. Partial funding of £30,321* (funding requested was £36,982 (£1,900 match funding secured)).
Climate education and guidance for whole school communities to facilitate and enable climate action.

*The task group would like to recommend that the Board agree to fund the Year 1 costs of £19,557 and ring fence the task group's remaining budget of £10,764 to contribute to the Year 2 costs, the Year 2 allocation is subject to satisfactory performance in Year 1.

There were no comments raised and the Board APPROVED to fund OASES £30,321 (as per the recommendations above*) from the 2022/23 Area Budget.

Employment, Enterprise and Training (EET) Task Group

The group met on 15 February and received 2 presentations – one from the Careers Manager at Consett Academy and the other from Nicola Little who gave an update on the Celebrate Difference project that received funding from the DVP's 2021/22 Area Budget.

With the task group's remaining budget of approx £17k (includes an added underspend), the group also considered 2 expressions of interest that they were planning on recommending to the Board for funding. However, the project proposal from the North East LEP for a Skills Audit for £5,675 is no longer going ahead as the North East LEP do not have capacity to carry out the audit. The Task Group looked at other options and it emerged that it can be done in-house (DCC) with no cost from the 2022/23 Area Budget.

This now leaves £5,675 to be allocated, which is to be split between the Health and Wellbeing Task Group (£1,450) and Towns and Villages Task Group (£4,225) which is discussed below under the respective task group updates.

The Task Group would like to recommend one project to the Board for funding:

1. **CDC Enterprise Agency**, Emboss: Derwent Valley. Funding request of £12,000 (£2,800 match funding secured).
Support for small businesses/self-employed individuals through weekly drop in sessions that includes group coaching, networking and access to additional business support services, with specific support to those claiming Universal Credit from Consett Job Centre.

There were no comments raised and the Board APPROVED to fund CDC Enterprise Agency £12,000 from the 2022/23 Area Budget.

Fiona gave an update on the Consett Air Training Corp's STEM project (which received funding from the 2022/23 Area Budget). Rosemary Morris (Chair of EET Task Group) and Fiona were invited along to the Air Cadets to see in action the impact of the funding. They both thought it was an excellent project and were very impressed with what they saw. Rosemary added that they are a shining example of what the youth can do.

Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Task Group

The Older Person's Social Isolation Fund (OPSIF) and Healthy Relationship Fund (HRF) projects that were approved at the January Board meeting have all progressed through the funding appraisal process.

One of the OPSIF projects SportsWorks - Health and Happiness Hubs, received partial funding of £3,550 (due to insufficient funds available) and it was suggested that part of the underspend, as discussed under the EET Task Group above, is used to top up the project by £1,450 giving it a total allocation of £5k.

There were no objections from the Board and they APPROVED to allocate a further £1,450 to SportWorks.

Towns and Villages (T&V) Task Group

At the task group meeting on 23 March, the group were given a brief update on the 3 projects that were previously supported by the Board:

- Zero Carbon Consett (£56,000) - Offer of grant has been issued, however the recruitment of an apprentice has been delayed due to a restructure within the service.
 - Community Speed Watch Vehicle (£37,740) - Offer of grant has been issued.
 - Community Safety Traffic Project (£72,260) - following a report that was circulated to communities on the potential schemes to be included in the project, further meetings are to be held to address the queries raised from the report.
- Fiona advised that match funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner's office has now been secured, with specific conditions attached to it.

Following the Board's agreement, in January, for the task group to develop a number of initiatives for Consett Town Centre to spend the remaining £44k, unfortunately it has not been possible to progress with the digital noticeboard. Therefore the task group considered other options for reallocating the funding (approx £15k). Together with the underspend from the EET Task Group (£4,225) and the £44k, the task group has £48,225 to allocate to projects specifically in Consett Town Centre.

The group discussed a proposal they had received from DCC's Community Economic Development Team (CEDT) who are seeking a contribution of £25k to help bridge a funding gap and allow Phase 2 of Middle Street works to be completed. Nearly £500k has already been spent on Middle Street to date, however, £244,368 is required to complete Phase 2 of the works, but there is currently a shortfall of £38k.

After a lengthy and difficult discussion by the task group and given the priorities around getting people into the town centre and the consultation with businesses in Middle Street, they are therefore proposing that the Board consider funding £25k from the T&V fund. Assurances have been given from the CEDT that subject to the contribution from the DVP being forthcoming, the remaining £14k can be sought to allow work to start on site quickly.

Cllr Watson commented at the Board meeting and felt that this development has become an embarrassment. He also said that he raised his objections about supporting the proposal at the task group meeting on 23 March, and following the meeting he composed an email that was sent to Senior officers within DCC. He then read out the contents of the email (which is copied below):

'I am formally requesting a review of the Consett Town Centre Project which had a £1m spend allocated to it. The reason for the request is that at a meeting of the Town and Villages Task Group we were informed that the first Phase of the Middles Street Project had been completed costing £496,000, that there was a short fall of funding for the 2 Phase of a 3 Phase project to go ahead that there was only £206,000 left which was not enough to complete the 2 Phase. In order to enable the 2 Phase to go ahead the Town and Villages Task Group were been asked to recommend to the Derwent Valley Partnership Board to contribute from their Town and Villages fund £38,000, to meet that shortfall.

The key areas I want reviewed and answers on are:

- (1) A clear presentation of the build up of the initial £1m projected spend across the 3 Phases. I want to understand when a project forecasted spend is built up, how much is based on quotes from suppliers, what inflation % is built in and what contingency element is built in.*
- (2) A presentation of where the spend is now against the forecasted spend and clear explanations on any variances.*

- (3) *When explaining variances, I would like to understand the stage-gates in which these variances are brought to Council and what the decision making process is before continuing. This is an area which will show accountability and integrity in managing budgets and tax-payers money.*
- (4) *An overall position of where we are now, how the £1m appears not to be there now and also what the options on the table are, as the only one I have heard of is to ask for money from the Town and Villages fund which I find quite astounding.'*

Cllr Watson said that DCC will have a contingency fund that will support completion of the works in Middle Street. He also said he is totally against any funding from the T&V Fund being used on the Middle Street development.

A discussion then ensued with the following comments noted:

- Should the Board agree to contribute to Middle Street, then a schedule of the works to be completed and a breakdown in costs should be provided.
- With any building/development project that is undertaken, a contingency plan will be built in.
- Would DCC refund any money to the T&V Fund if they found the money from elsewhere? This was discussed at the T&V Task Group meeting and it is likely that it would be. However there is no funding available for Phase 3 of the work and any funding would be to support the completion of Phase 2.
- It would set a bad precedent, if funding was given, as retrospective projects cannot be funded under AAP criteria and this is considered as an ongoing project with money already allocated.
Although this is not a DVP issue, the DVP and councillors are getting complaints about Middle Street and by offering financial support via the T&V funding it can help to complete Phase 2 of the works.
- Rather than reject the proposal, it was suggested that it is put on hold until we get the information we need and then make a decision based on that information.
- Phase 3 of the works needs to be repriced as initially Phase 3 included the lighting but that has already been completed.
- Holding an event in Middle Street would be an embarrassment given the state of the street.

The Board agreed to put the proposal on hold until more information was forthcoming and clarification on the points made in Cllr Watson's email was provided. A decision would then be made at the May Board meeting based on the information received.

Based on the discussions above it was suggested that that Consett Town Centre events proposal to use up the remaining £23k is put hold until a decision is reached regarding the Middle Street proposal.

5. Community Engagement Review Consultation

At the September 2023 Board meeting, ERS (who were commissioned by DCC) gave a presentation on the Community Engagement Review and Consultation. ERS has delivered their report to DCC and within it there are some proposals such as changes around the model, boundaries, funding and the community development work AAP teams do.

The consultation is available on DCC's website at <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/29179/County-Durham-community-engagement-consultation> and the closing date for comments is 23 April 2023.

Cllr Watson asked if there are other options? Fiona said that the report contains what the proposals are and it is asking the public for their comments around these changes.

Cllr Andrews said she has looked at the report and is not comfortable with it. She feels there is no data to support it and they have not compared anything to other Council areas.

Fiona said that a Board member session could be organised to discuss the report and submit a collective response, however it was felt that individual feedback would have more of an impact than doing it collectively.

Lea McConnell raised concerns about the continuity in provision and what affect if any this would have on current AAP work, ie priorities and Task Group projects. Fiona said that any changes would not be implemented until after April 2024 therefore it is business as usual for the AAPs up until then.

6. Coordinators Update

Fun and Food

Funding has been allocated to the following projects, in the DVP area, to deliver activities with healthy food during the Easter 2023 holidays:

Random's Retreat: Fun, Food and Furrries £3,455
Learning a New Way: Wellbeing for All £610
Stomping Grounds Forest School NE: Into the Wild £3,724
Derwentside Trust: Glenroyd Easter Fun and Activities £840

Applications for Fun and Food funding for the May Half Term school holidays closes on 12 April 2023. A panel will be set up to look at the applications and any Board member who wishes to be involved can contact the DVP Team.

Public Representative Recruitment

Recruitment for 3 public reps to join the DVP Board from May 2023 is ongoing and the closing date for applications is 24 April 2024. Anyone interested in applying should contact the DVP Team.

Project Monitoring Visits

As well as receiving regular monitoring information from the projects that the DVP has funded, project monitoring visits also take place.

Consett Air Training Corp, STEM project - Fiona and Rosemary attended.

Durham Constabulary, Positive Changes (OPSIF project from 2020) - Fiona and Kath Clements attended.

Staffing

Corinne Walton will be back from maternity leave at the beginning of May and Fiona will be going back to her post in Chester le Street.

On behalf of the Board, Cllr Watson thanked Fiona for her support and contribution over the last year.

7. Meeting Close and Date of Next Meeting (AGM)

Mark thanked everyone for their attendance and made a special thank you to Fiona, especially in helping him in his role as Chair of the Board.

The next Board meeting (AGM) will be on Wednesday 24 March, 6pm at The Salvation Army Hall, Consett.