

3 Towns Partnership Board Meeting
5.30pm on Thursday 13 July 2023 at Crook Civic Centre

PRESENT:

Partner Organisations

Gordon Elliott

Liz Bradley

Graham Tomaszko

Insp. Ed Turner

Public Representatives

Pauline Moger

Mary Hall

Fiona Nicol

Dianne Mackay

Jay Conlon

Chris Ebdon

Elected Members

Councillor Richard Manchester, Durham County Council

Councillor Patricia Jopling, Durham County Council

Cllr Anne Reed, Durham County Council

Councillor Mike Currah, Durham County Council

Councillor Fraser Tinsley, Durham County Council

Councillor Olwyn Gunn, Durham County Council

Councillor Margaret Elgie, Greater Willington Town Council

Co-opted Members

Councillor Paul Stokes, Tow Law Town Council

Officer Attendance:

Sandy Denney AAP Coordinator

Nicola Woodgate Community Development Project Officer

Joanne Ashworth Towns and Villages Community Development Project Officer

Kelly Hughes AAP Support Officer

Presenters:

Peter Ollivere – Housing Strategy

Public Attendance:

5 members of the public were in attendance

Apologies:

Helen Ward, David Dixon, Jill Mathewson

A1. Welcome and Introductions

RM opened the meeting and thanked the Board for attending.

A2. Agreement of minutes from the previous meeting 18 May 2023 – Matters Arising

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

A3. Countywide Partners

PO gave a presentation on the Housing Strategy and opened up discussions.

- Concerns were raised regarding the tenure of property available for family groups and elderly residents. The strategy needs to ensure properties are built to fit the community/local need. (An example was given of Crook where most properties are only 2 bedrooms)
- Comments were made that the drive around renewability is good for the environment and climate change and needs to be built into new properties so that the ongoing costs associated with energy are affordable to residents and they can afford to stay in their properties.
- Funding issues were raised. Agree with the principals but questions surrounding where the funding will be coming from was a major concern giving the current economic climate.
- The 2019 strategy did not put the recommendations laid out in it into the County Durham Plan. It's important to ensure this is done for the 2023 strategy.
- Regeneration of current housing needs to take place. Absentee landlords are also a regular issue as well as inhabitable housing. Suggestion could DCC work towards acquiring these properties and developing to become habitable To avoid these types of properties to be bought up by absentee landlords from elsewhere in the Country
- Concerns were raised around selective licensing and how it is unfair for current landlords who abide by the licensing and maintain their properties to a good standard. Question was asked how the areas for selective licensing were chosen.
- Concerns were raised about section 29 notices (No fault evictions) There are properties that cannot reach the licensing requirements. More support needs to be given to landlords so they can understand their options.
- Durham County Council need to be transparent with people on what the strategy will do. A suggestion was also made to do a gap analysis from the 2019 to the 2023 strategy and build on that. The strategy needs to be summarised for residents and not raise unrealistic expectations issues were raised regarding multiple occupation housing and how this can contribute to ASB. A suggestion of no multiple occupation houses in the strategy
- Community engagement is not easy, DCC need to get this right to get the correct responses to the strategy.
- Concerns were raised around unsuitable housing for younger people. Support needs to be given to young people to live independently at an affordable price.

A4. Local Neighbourhood Issues

Neighbourhood Budget Applications and Neighbourhood Budget Report

NW gave an update on Neighbourhood Budget and directed the Board to the report in their packs and said one application had been circulated to the Board electronically since the last meeting.

NW said there were 3 applications to go through at the Meeting, all of which are for information only.

- 1. Willington & Hunwick Heritage Trail App, Northern Heartlands**
Councillors Olwyn Gunn and Fraser Tinsley
NB £5,000; Match £1,000; Total £6,000
No comments were made.

- 2. Oakenshaw Play Area, Durham County Council**
Councillors Olwyn Gunn and Fraser Tinsley
NB £2,000; Match £50,000; Total £52,000
No comments were made.

- 3. Tow Law Play Area, Durham County Council**
Councillor Richard Manchester
NB £20,000 (£10,000 which is Towns and Villages); Match £29,499.72; Total £49,499.72
No comments were made.

A5. Priorities and Action Plans

Action Plan and Project Updates

JA gave Towns and Villages project updates:

The 3 Towns play equipment improvement project application has been received by the outdoor facilities team. There is £60,000 from the 3 Towns Board which is contributing towards £200,000 worth of projects. **JA** will work with the team to support consultations on these projects. The traffic project has been approved.

The team will be working with civic pride to develop the bulb planting project.

Concerns were raised regarding new charging points in Glenholme Drive and why the public were not consulted about these. It was confirmed these are not part of the Towns and Villages scheme, however, **SD** informed the Board that she was aware of the charger being installed at Glenholme

ACTION – AAP to discover if more charging points are planned and report back.

Questions were asked regarding the CCTV project and length of time the project is taking particularly given the ASB in the park currently surrounding scrambler bikes and people in balaclavas. The Board were informed that there is a meeting scheduled next week to discuss the projects. There have been multiple issues with the project and currently it is whether or not the lighting is sufficient for the CCTV monitoring. This will be relayed back to the Board when more information is available.

SD updated the Board and informed them that:

On 6 July 2023 the AAP held a networking event at Open Door Willington Church. Invitations were sent to organisations across the 3 Towns, in total there were 46 attendees. A special thank you to the Board members who attended and facilitated the event. The event consisted of **JM** showing the group Durham Insight and how to navigate it and discussing the themes for community recovery.

The most common themes from the discussion were funding, sustainability, volunteers, and staff recruitment and retention. The event highlighted that there is a desire for more networking events in the future. It was recommended to the Board that task groups should be centred around the themes identified at the event and a suggestion was made for 2 task groups in September, however,

this will require the September Board meeting to be rescheduled from 14 September to 28 September 2023.

BOARD AGREED

ACTION – AAP TO REARRANGE SEPTEMBER BOARD TO 28 SEPTEMBER 2023 AND TO ARRANGE 2 TASK GROUPS FOR SEPTEMBER 2023.

Queries were raised regarding how the transition into community networks will work. Support was shown for the AAP, staff, and the work they do. Comments were made regarding the struggles for VCS services and how invaluable the help is from the AAP. The Community Networking Event was a success; however, a suggestion was made to allow more time for cross networking in future. The Board were informed that Durham Community Action offer training for volunteers.

GE gave a presentation on Community Engagement review. The review went to cabinet this week and the papers are online to access. An electronic version of the presentation can be circulated to the Board.

Discussions took place regarding community representative roles. It was questioned if the Board panel will stay the same or if members will need to reapply for their roles on the Board. It was suggested that relatively new members will most likely keep their places, however, longer standing may need to re-interview.

Comments were made regarding the positives of change, however, other than renaming to Community Networks, what are the 3 biggest main changes?

GE responded that the expectation is to free up more time for staff to develop on the ground and work closer with communities, improve links with County Durham Partnership and a better, more simplified funding system.

Concerns were raised between the strategic and local level of community networks. It was suggested there needs to be a local focus to benefit communities. More concerns were raised regarding the decision making of the review as this was taken by cabinet and not full council. Questions were raised regarding where the decisions are taken, by whom and how these will be influenced.

A suggestion was made to create a summary of the report for the public to view, as the cabinet report is long. This communication needs to be detailed.

Issues were highlighted surrounding the boundary proposals and concerns to the 3 Towns losing Tow Law. The Board were informed that the boundaries need to be discussed with cabinet.

A6. Countywide Partners

Local Policing Update

ET gave a policing update:

- The chief constable is leaving, if another is not in post by August, the deputy chief constable will take place until a suitable replacement is found.
- The police are continuing to develop their relationships with children in the area. They are visiting schools to discuss ASB and online security to help protect young people.

- The ANPR project is almost ready to start.
- Speeding still remains an issue in the 3 Towns, however, police encourage people to speak to the police to support the program.
- The CCTV in Glenholme will make jobs easier once it is installed.
- 2 members of the Crook policing team are now trained to be drone pilots. They are hoping to start using the drone in the area soon.
- The next PACT sessions are as follows:
 - 20 July 2023 – Crook
 - 21 July 2023 – Tow Law
 - 22 July 2023 - Willington

A7. Date and time of next meeting

5.30pm on Thursday 28 September 2023 at Crook Civic Centre